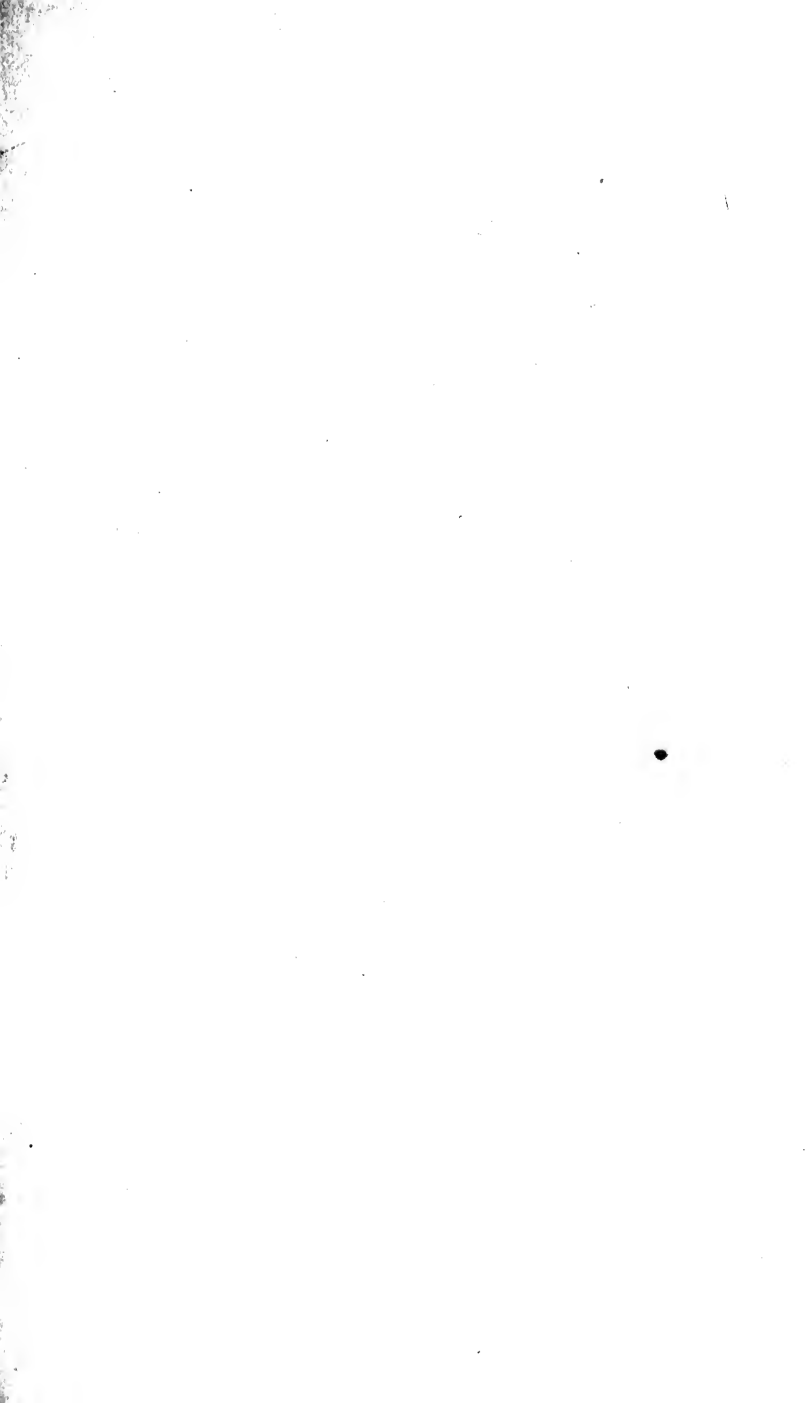




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THE
EMIGRANT FAMILY.

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VOL. I.



THE  
EMIGRANT FAMILY:

OR,

*The Story of an Australian Settler.*

BY THE  
AUTHOR OF "SETTLERS AND CONVICTS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

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1849.

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TO  
CAPTAIN MACONOCHIE, R.N., K.H.,  
IN TESTIMONY OF  
THE SOUNDNESS OF THE PRINCIPLES HE HAS ENDEAVOURED  
TO INTRODUCE INTO PENAL DISCIPLINE,  
AND IN TOKEN OF  
THE RESPECT THAT OUGHT TO BE ACCORDED TO  
HIS SELF-DENIAL  
IN THE PAINFUL TASK OF EXPERIMENTING THEM,  
**This Tale**  
IS INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

*Gen. Mac. R. N. 361  
D. 2426e v. 1*



## PREFACE.

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THE main design in the composition of these volumes, and that to which every other has been carefully subordinated, was the delineation of the actual life of an Emigrant Family, and the scenery about their homestead in the Australian colonies, in the middle of the nineteenth century. Of course, all must not expect to meet with a Martin Beck for an overseer: but with the single exception of the introduction of a character necessary to furnish the tale with sufficient of plot to interest the lovers of romance, everything exhibited is a simple copy from actual daily life.

The use, moreover, which I have made of the character of Beck will be found a most legitimate and important one: that of exhibiting to the new settler the various great errors which may be fallen into, and must be guarded against. For, in fact, I have merely concentrated in him singly, what the settler may easily enough meet with in a more dissipated form at the hands of several.

Statistical information could not, of course, be introduced into a work like the present: but all who desire to trace things into more minute

detail have now an authority to resort to, as sound and at as cheap a rate as could be desired. I refer to the various publications of Mr. Sidney. I never had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Sidney, but it affords me much gratification to bear testimony to the value of his works. They are the only books I have met with in which I could recognise bush life as I saw it myself during sixteen years' residence in the colony. The "Australian Hand-Book" of that gentleman ought to be in every free emigrant's hand as he makes the voyage; and "The Emigrant's Journal" could not be surpassed for practical utility. The editor's weekly replies to questions sent him afford the most precise and correct guidance on all points to the intending emigrant.

The geographical features of the country are given exactly in the present tale, except in the mere instance of the particular spot at which the family is located. The reasons for that exception, and its propriety, will be obvious to every reflecting person.

Should the reader accord these volumes a full perusal, I render him the most valuable return in my power:—I wish him as pure and ample a pleasure as I found myself in making the acquaintance of the ladies of the tale.

THE AUTHOR OF "SETTLERS AND CONVICTS."

(*Knight's Monthly Vol. May 1847.*)

*Feb. 7, 1849.*



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# THE EMIGRANT FAMILY.

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## CHAPTER I.

New Settlers and Australians.—Looking for Land.—  
Lieutenant Bracton and his Family.

ON the track from Sydney to Port Philip, through the interior of Australia, before it emerges from the well-settled districts into the intermediate wilds, there stands a neat and comfortable house of entertainment, long known as Lupton's Inn; so called after the proprietor and host, a steady but enterprising Australian, by whom it was established. In the aspect of the country immediately within sight, there is nothing remarkable to the English eye; the newest emigrant might easily suppose himself on the borders of an English country village. Here, a level, well-fenced field exhibits tokens of the husbandman's toils; there, the primeval forest, without any very striking features, borders the road-side; and the

straight, broad, level road itself, made under the direction of the Colonial surveyors, by convict gangs, competes with our best roads around the British metropolis. If anything gives a feature of Australian character to the scene, it is the cloudlessness of the deep blue sky, and the rather oppressive heat of the atmosphere.

On opposite sides of the equator, the seasons of the year are, of course, reversed. For several weeks after the December midsummer of the colony, glowing days occur: days on which the strong westerly winds, blowing from the parched wastes of the interior, render travelling more than ordinarily toilsome. On the evening of such a day, about an hour before sun-down, there rode up to the verandah of the road-side inn an elderly man of portly presence, with the bearing of an English country gentleman, accompanied by a younger, apparently his son. The more youthful traveller had just so much of the aspect and manners of a sailor, as a seafaring life usually impresses upon men of good breeding and education. These were Lieutenant Bracton and his son Willoughby, on their way from Port Philip to Sydney.

Scarcely were the horses relieved of the weight of their riders, which in the case of the elder was by no means insignificant, when a heavy drove of

cattle came tramping and jostling each other from the opposite direction; the loud and heavy cracks of a stock-whip fell thick and fast on the ear, mingled with the quick barking of several collies, and the occasional "Yho, ho, ho!" of a horseman, as he rode in the rear of the horned mob, and urged them onward toward the inn. The host, forgetting his newly-arrived guests, at the well-known sound, was in an instant out in front of the verandah.

The Australians, we must here remark, are growing up a race by themselves; fellowship of country has already begun to distinguish them and bind them together in a very remarkable manner. Whenever they come into contact with each other, even when considerable difference of rank exists, this sympathy operates strongly: there is no attempt either to check or conceal it. After an instant's survey, the host, a fine-looking and respectable man, well to do in the world, turned suddenly round to one of his men exclaiming, "Reuben Kable from Broken Bay!—what a mob of kangaroos he's got!" then hastily motioning the man to throw down the slip rails of the fence, he advanced into the middle of the road, and, facing the rushing drove, he waved his broad-leaved straw hat before them, and having checked their headlong career, turned them in through the

open panel to their night's resting-place. Their driver was now riding leisurely behind, wheeling his practised horse, and flourishing the eleven-foot thong of his short-handled stock-whip, as one or another of the beasts turned and strove to rush back down the road; bringing it into the herd again with a touch from the hard hide-lash, that sent the pulverized skin and hair of the beast flying up like smoke.

"Where did you get that mob from, Reuben?" inquired the host; his good-humoured smile of old acquaintanceship mingling with a slight satirical laugh, at the wild, raw-boned aspect of a large portion of the drove.

"Everywhere; from Brisbane Water to Mangrove Creek," replied the young stockman. "Some of them have never been in a yard since they were calved: I could never get them out of the mountains before. But the fire swept all the grass off just before Christmas, and they've got as tame as dogs; so I thought it was a good chance for getting them up to Manaroo. Eighteen months there will make them look very different. Is the feed good?"

"Never better, when I came down: that's a month ago."

"There's been some very hot weather since that," said the Australian, inquiringly.



"They've had good thunder-showers with it."

The new comer bowed to the two travellers with the air of a person used to good society, and, throwing himself easily off his horse, wound the long thong of his whip, in the customary way, up and down the myrtle handle, and flinging it under the verandah, proceeded to unbridle his horse and take off the saddle. The animal, at a friendly pat from his rider, swung round and walked off to his accustomed grazing ground.

Reuben Kable was the possessor of considerable property in horned cattle, and the resident and owner of one of those small but first-rate farms given to settlers by free grant in the early days of the colony. His homestead was at Broken Bay, a port some twenty miles or more to the north of Port Jackson. He exhibited a more than ordinarily full and forcible manifestation of the common characteristics of his countrymen, through possessing more than ordinary intellectual endowments. His height was considerably over six feet; his person slim, but remarkably vigorous and active; his face symmetrical, and just saved from being fair by a slight tint of tan; his hair brown; his eye of that peculiar grey which in the hours of common thought is so unsuggestive and pretenceless, but glitters and flashes under strong excitement like the crystals

of a mineral in the sunlight. The utter, yet not discourteous, nonchalance of his race, however, would have been regarded by a stranger as his most distinctive characteristic.

Lieutenant Bracton and his son forgot the weariness of their long hot journey in the cordial salutation of the tall, handsome, quaker-like native, who frankly introduced himself to them, according to the custom of his countrymen—

“Are you on the road before me, gentlemen, or going down the country?” inquired the Australian.

“From Melbourne,” said Willoughby Bracton. “We have been in search of land; but my father is not fully satisfied with any we have met with hitherto.”

“Newly arrived in the colony, then?”

“About three months ago.”

“But you can find no land unoccupied hereabouts—scarcely, indeed, for the last hundred miles you have come.”

“The fact is,” said the lieutenant, “we are now going on to Sydney, almost without any other object than curiosity to see your chief city. We may avail ourselves when there of the opportunity of returning to Port Philip by water; but we have thought nothing about land for some days past.”

“You have had some heavy showers on the road, I suppose? I judge by the thunder-showers at Manaroo. The Port Philip track lies off to the interior of the Warragong Mountains as Manaroo does seaward of them. The thunder weather mostly gathers there. Probably you know them only as they are named on the maps as the Australian Alps.”

“We had two or three slight thunder-storms,” replied Willoughby; “but they were all in the day-time. My father is an old sailor, and the disappointment of his search annoys him a great deal more than the weather.”

A very short time suffices to provide a dinner in the interior of the colony. The quarter of beef, or side of mutton, or cask of salted pork, is generally at hand; and a fresh junk of wood on the hearth soon brings the fryingpan into a state of service. A steak off the rump of one of mine host's best four-year-old bullocks, killed a day or two before, soon steamed savory on the parlour table. A new damper, or cake of flour baked without yeast, sweet as a nut, and smelling only of the pure wheat, and hot out of the wood-ashes of the hearth, but clean as if baked in an oven, accompanied it. A bottle of porter, and a couple of glasses for the English guests, together with the tea-tray and its apparatus, in compliance with the

already-known taste of the Australian traveller, completed the preparations: preparations, the seasonableness of which was soon well vindicated by the travellers' appetites. It is very often the end of his day's stage that determines the hour of the bushman's dinner. The mellow light of the setting sun lay golden and still, and almost holy, upon forest and field, as Lieutenant Bracton and his son, and Reuben Kable, walked out again to enjoy, they their cigars, and he his short waistcoat pocket pipe, in the cool air, under the verandah.

"If my knowledge and advice, Lieutenant Bracton, can be of any service to you in your undertaking, either in selecting your land or making your other arrangements," said the Australian, "I shall contribute them with a great deal of pleasure. I hear at times from your countryfolks that they consider us a very plain, rough race; but I believe we have a good reputation for uprightness. To say that our knowledge of colonial" (*Anglicè*, Australian) "matters is tolerably sound, is to say but little in our praise. If we do not understand our own country and its affairs, what should we understand?"

In reply to the thanks of his new acquaintances, and their expression of eagerness to have the advantage of his advice, the colonist went on

to what was probably the pith and motive of his communication:—

“It has struck me several times, since I heard your means and wishes explained more fully than you stated them at first, that a farm which I see stands advertised in one of the Sydney papers for sale by private contract, would suit you, in the first instance, rather better than new land.”

“The price of course much higher?”

“No : I have no doubt you may get it for ready cash at very little, if any, more than the Government upset price. The owner is moving his stock across to the Port Philip district ; and from what I know of him, I dare say that if he can get anything like his own money by private contract, he ’ll jump at the chance—that is, with the cash in hand—rather than delay or go to public auction. But if you like to persevere and find a tract of Government land within the colony of New South Wales, there ’s no doubt but you can do it. You can always ascertain at the surveyor-general’s office where such land lies ; and any stock-keeper about the part will show you the best run,\* and the best spot for a station, for five pounds : I could get a hundred runs found for me in a couple of months for five pounds a piece. But

\* Any tract of land for depasturing stock.

I should recommend the chance I was telling you of."

"What quantity of land is there?"

"Just the two sections; twelve hundred and eighty acres: that is plenty large enough for a first farm. As your stock increases, you can always form stations further out. One of the most important things is to get good water at a home-station; and at the Rocky Springs, the station I have been speaking about, there is some of the best water in the country, and the springs never fail in the greatest droughts. There is another circumstance of the locality which to my mind greatly increases the value of land thereabouts—it is not above sixty or seventy miles from a good harbour. It is on the upper part of the Morrumbidgee River. At present there is no road from that to the sea, passable by drays, because there is no large settlement on that part of the coast; but with several good harbours, and some of the richest soil in the colony on that part of the coast, in course of time there must be. Active colonization had just extended about so far along the seaside when the southern settlements came into notice; and as soon as it was found that the interior could be traversed to them, off everybody went down the tract to Port Philip, and colonization along the

coast almost ceased. But when the country behind Port Philip comes to be pretty well filled up, the next thing will probably be the extension of the colonies coastwise, and along the interior to meet each other; and whenever that takes place, there will certainly be a great main road made from the heads of the Morrumbidgee, which are almost midway between the two colonies, to the coast: settlers will never travel with their wool-teams two or three hundred miles to a shipping place, when Bateman's Bay and Twofold Bay are within half or a third of the distance."

"Your description of the land and its situation, Mr. Kable," said Willoughby, "impresses me very much in favour of it."

"If you should finally fix on it," rejoined his informant, "I think, by seeing the agent in Sydney pretty early, you may make almost sure of it. Money is very scarce; and I know the proprietor is one of those restless people that, now he has got the notion in his head of going to the Port Philip country, nothing will content him till he gets there. At the same time, it's ten to one if any one makes an offer for the land, except some of those fellows in Sydney who buy to sell again; and they'll never give him cash: or, if they do, they'll want it at about half value."

“Who is the agent?” inquired Lieutenant Bracton.

“I really did not take notice; but I dare say they have the paper in-doors. You’ll find it advertised as ‘The Rocky Springs.’ Are you aware whether there is likely to be any change in the Regulations—the Land Regulations?”

“I believe not,” said the lieutenant. “The British Government takes its ground slowly and surely; and, such being the case, ought not to give way to every passing wish for innovation.”

“Ah! indeed!” exclaimed the Australian, with an unmistakeable alteration of tone and manner. “I recollect hearing of the time when free grants of land were the custom of this country; and then, although there seldom lay a dozen three-masted vessels in the waters of Sydney Cove at once, and the voyage was often spun out to five or six months, we had rich emigrants flocking here in shoals. Plenty of money came to the colony: we had plenty of customers for our herds: everything went ahead. Now it takes all an emigrant’s capital to purchase his land.”

“That may be very true, sir,” replied Lieutenant Bracton. “Meantime, we can only act on things as they are, not as they used to be.”

“But you forget, Mr. Kable,” said Willoughby, “that the proceeds of the land sales are applied



to the conveyance of labourers to the colony, without whom the land would be worth nothing."

"I confess, sir," said the native, "that, coming from the parent community, you gentlemen ought to understand the business better than I do: indeed, I cannot comprehend it at all. In the first place (though I do not lay great stress on that), when these labourers reach here, we have to pay them from the time they begin to work; then, in the next (which I lay every stress upon), I pay for my section of six hundred and forty acres, just six hundred and forty pounds. One section of land will feed one—and only one—flock of sheep; and that one flock of sheep is one man's—and only one man's—work. Well, the cost of a single male emigrant's passage from the British Islands to these colonies is eighteen or twenty pounds. Twenties in six hundred and forty, there are thirty-two. Now, then, have I paid my six hundred and forty pounds for that one man's passage, or have I paid the passage of thirty-two labourers; when I only get, and only want, the one?"

"It certainly has a very anomalous look. I never saw the principle in that light before," replied Willoughby.

"I will admit, that my statement is made broadly," continued Reuben Kable, "and that

there are circumstances that modify slightly its bearing. For instance : this one flock of sheep requires half the labour of a second man as hut-keeper and night watchman, besides hurdles and wool-sheds, and team-drivers for the conveyance of their wool to a port : all which together, however, would not make up more than fully the labour of the second emigrant. And also, it may be added that land is obtainable for grazing without purchase, on rent. But, after all, in a vast proportion of cases the hardship of the arrangement to a man of limited capital remains. In fact, it comes to this : the large stockholder can push his flocks out into ground rented for almost a nominal sum, but the owner of one or two flocks has no need to go beyond his homestead, which is purchased at this enormous rate ; so that the little stockholder is paying for the conveyance of the great stockholder's labourers to the colony. My neighbour, with his hundred flocks on ground rented for almost nothing, is shepherding his flocks with the other fifty or sixty men conveyed to the colony at the cost of the twelve hundred and eighty pounds I paid for my run of two sections, for my two first and, as yet, only flocks."

As the speaker ceased, he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and restoring it to its usual place

in his waistcoat pocket, walked down to his cattle. Meanwhile Lieutenant Bracton, during the remarks of the Australian, had silently withdrawn himself to the other end of the verandah, where he stood smoking his cigar. The moon was shining with all that brilliancy of light that renders it so remarkable an object as it glides through the lovely skies of the colony, and a plentiful dew was already glistening on the rails, as the young bushman laid his arms upon them, and scrutinized his herd. Some were prone, sleepily chewing the cud; others stood motionless alongside the fences; occasionally some crusty old cow butted away with rude horn a strange calf that came wandering in its waywardness up to her side; and now and then one would thrust forward its head, as if to see whether the rails that held them in duress were about to be taken down.

As Reuben Kable recurred to the remark of Lieutenant Bracton in vindication of the parent country, followed by silent withdrawal as his strictures had become more pointed, the feeling passed through his mind—"I hope I have not offended the old gentleman: he seems a fine manly old chap. At that instant a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"I have been settling it with my father," said Willoughby, who now stood beside him, "to turn

my horse's head and ride back with you as far as you go toward ' the Rocky Springs,' and ' take a lunar ' at them. My father will go on to Sydney, and hear what instructions the agent has."

" You could not do a better thing ;" replied Reuben. " My cattle travel very wild ; some of them are off down every gully they see :—you can ride up to my station with me ; and stick to the tail of 'em, while I keep 'em out of the bush. And then I 'll ride back by the Morrumbidgee and show you the station at ' the Rocky Springs. '"

In depicting the various characteristics of the colony and its different classes, no primary and contradistinguishing features must be overlooked. The reader may observe here a little trait of the Australian character—thrift. If *two* birds can be killed by a stone, the Australian is never content to kill but *one*. It must, however, be added, that this thrift is rarely accompanied by what we call duplicity : it results more from a habit of economy than from selfishness.

The proposed arrangement appeared as desirable to Lieutenant Bracton, as it was agreeable to his son : it was therefore determined upon as the next day's course of the travellers.

The family of Lieutenant Bracton consisted of his wife, his son Willoughby, and a younger son who remained behind in England studying for

the medical profession; together with two young ladies: the younger his only daughter Marianna, the elder an orphan niece named Katharine.

Some years had elapsed since Lieutenant Bracton retired from the Royal Navy for the express purpose of becoming a settler in these colonies. But the project, unexpectedly delayed by family occurrences, was now only in course of being carried out. Previously to his retirement, Lieutenant Bracton had for some years been in command of one of the smaller vessels of the navy; and considerable periods of Willoughby's boyhood were spent with his father at sea. His latter years, up to the commencement of the tale, were passed chiefly in the whaling ships of the Greenland seas. During that time, the young man had acquired—more through success, perhaps, than extraordinary economy—a handsome little capital of his own, in addition to some bequests of relatives. The family funds, on the other hand, had on the whole diminished; increasing, proportionately as they did so, the solicitude of its heads, and their desire to found an independent home of progressive promise for their children. For it may be further added, that Katharine Bracton, though only a niece, had always been regarded as one of their own children by her uncle and aunt. Her father, Lieutenant Bracton's elder and sole brother, dying on a

foreign station, and her mother soon afterwards, Mrs. Bracton had taken the little orphan, and soon became fondly attached to her charge. Such was the little cluster of human life that had now betaken themselves to the enterprise of founding a home at the antipodes.

## CHAPTER II.

Cattle Driving.—A Rest in the Bush.—An Australian Fog.  
—“The Rocky Springs.”

ANOTHER dazzling morning broke out from the east, speedily chasing the chill and dew of the moonlit night. By the time the sun was two hours high, its beams were hot and its light a blaze; and myriads of the insect world filled the ear with their low continuous hum, which swells fuller and fuller until it begins to cease, almost suddenly, under the intense heat of noon.

The driving of a hundred and fifty head of lean cattle between two and three hundred miles through a parched country is a serious charge. The young Australian's breakfast was completed before his companions had well begun theirs, so that, by the time Willoughby was ready to mount, the drove was straggling loosely but impatiently up the road. Their driver with difficulty held in his strong stock-horse (which manifested no less impatience to be off), shifting himself restlessly in the saddle, as he lingered

talking with his countryman on the road in front, and throwing alternate glances toward the cattle, and toward the door whence his companion was to appear. With no little satisfaction Reuben Kable saw the Englishman's foot in the stirrup at last; and with a rough "good-day, captain," to the old weather-beaten tar they were leaving behind, and a nod to the host, he gave his horse the head, and, slightly bending forward over the horse's neck to gain power, he gave a three-quarter swing round of the long thong above his head, and back it came with a crack like a rifle. "Hey, hey, hey! yo-ho! Here, Nance, Nance, twenty-dogs-in-one! put 'em together: fetch 'em out, good bitch!" shouted the Australian, and in a minute the whole mob were rushing and jostling again along the road, and kicking up the cloud of dust that furnishes the stock-driver with one of the principal parts of his professional avocations, that of chewing sand all day. "Now, my lad," he cried to Willoughby; who, following for the first time in his life such a blindfold chase, strove to keep up to the tail of the cattle without running into them; "we must make Mittagong, if these poor beasts are to have any dinner." In another minute, cattle, and horsemen, and dust swept rapidly round an elbow of the bush; and the lieutenant



saw nothing but the dingy white cloud as it rose and swept away on the wind.

The old gentleman soon afterwards ordered his horse, and rode leisurely on towards Sydney, with considerably more satisfaction than he had felt for some time. His family had now been nearly three months in Melbourne, and the agent whom he had entrusted to discover for him a tract of land worth purchasing, was yet unsuccessful; probably because Lieutenant Bracton also rented of him the cottage he was occupying in the town. Willoughby had suggested a personal tour of inspection; but the further they advanced into the interior, the more sterile and unsatisfactory everything appeared to Europeans, unused to the scorched appearance of Australian vegetation in the summer months. At length the names of Yass, and Argyle, and Sydney, came to be mentioned by the travellers they met, as places so near, that they felt the inclination to pursue the journey forward, and at least inspect the elder colony before finally settling in the new.

From Lupton's Inn to the fine flats at the foot of the Mittagong range, where Reuben Kable intended to rest his cattle during the heat of the day, is something above thirteen miles. In some parts the road passes over ground full of loose stone, which, pulverized by the heat and the

crush of feet and vehicles, becomes in summer a thick bed of hot dust; in others steep hills add to the toil of travelling, and almost the whole way a close bush borders the road on both sides, rendering the air stagnant and sultry. Somewhat less than three hours' exertion, however, brought the horsemen down into the flats, stretching far away in open plains to the left. No longer urged by dog and man, the weary drove relaxed their pace, and, turning off the road, wandered slowly on in straggling and broken groups toward the spot to which their instinct drew them for water. Willoughby, following his companion's example, dismounted in the shade of the trees; which here, rooted in rich ground and supplied with a plenitude of moisture, sustain spreading heads of the thickest foliage, that furnish the wayfarer with the most delightful resting-place.

The horses were soon unsaddled and unbridled: not, however, without being first hobbled. A mounted bushman's accoutrements are his horse's hobbles, or else a long tether rope, which is coiled round the animal's neck when travelling; a good blanket or a cloak, made of opossum skins sewn together, to the size of about eight or nine feet by seven, and capable, when sound and doubled, of turning off a night's rain; a tin quart pot, and sundry bags containing tea, sugar,

“damper,” and beef. The quart pot is generally strapped to the saddle in front, on one side; the hobbles on the other; the ration-bags hanging across; and the blanket, or opossum cloak, carefully formed into a long hard roll, and fastened sometimes before and sometimes behind, is bent over the horse’s back. The tinder-box, or its modern substitute the lucifer match-box, is invariably stowed in the most dry and secure place the owner can find for it upon his own person.

Willoughby was already bushman enough to recollect his portion of the duties, when he saw his companion busy in kindling a fire and gathering the fuel; and by the time the sticks were blazing, the two quart pots were filled, ready to be placed in front of the fire on the windward side. In ten minutes more might be seen the Australian (who felt to a certain extent bound to enact the part of head-cook, in consideration of the less inferior proficiency of his fellow-traveller) sitting tailor-fashion in front of the fire, watching intently for the full bubble of the water, and directly it showed itself dropping carefully into the pot a capacious handful of tea. The click of the opening pocket-knives followed, and the meal was begun: the dogs standing round imploring, as earnestly and appealingly as they can by silence

and steadfast gazing, their share of their master's provision.

For a couple of hours the bushmen rested and refreshed themselves : the hearty meal, the pipe, and a yarn, soon while away so much time beneath a shady tree of a hot day. Whilst Willoughby tied up the bags and refastened all to the saddles, Reuben Kable took his whip and walked round the cattle, turning them along the road. Revived by their rest and feed, men and horses and dogs now went on at a lively pace for the range. By sun-down it was passed, upwards of twelve miles further on the whole accomplished, and the 'mob' safely paddocked for the night.

Having now given the reader a sufficient sketch of the customs of stock-driving, it would be wearisome to follow the travellers step by step. On the road to Manaroo Plains, a stock-yard or paddock may be secured for the safe custody of the drove every night ; but on the tracts to the far-out districts in some directions, the driver is compelled occasionally to camp in the bush and watch the cattle all night. In such cases, however, there is generally a second hand, and the night is divided in two watches between them. Several fires are sometimes lit at the mouth of a ravine, girt round by rocks too steep to be scaled by the cattle, and the drivers sleep by the fires,

encompassed by their dogs; the beasts are then as secure as if in a yard. So much trouble is involved in the recovery of cattle which stray away on a journey, far from their own run or grazing ground, that stockmen omit no precaution or vigilance to prevent it. The beasts generally make back, in course of time to their own run; but they return very leisurely: sometimes taking six weeks in traversing homewards only as much ground as they were driven over in as many days; never taking the road, but wandering through all the green spots they can find adjacent to their route; luxuriating for a couple of days in a retired grassy plat here, then crossing a range and lingering awhile in some rich secluded nook at its base; and so on to the end of their progress homeward.

Reuben Kable's object in removing his herd, was partly to rescue them from the wild condition into which they had got, through running amongst a labyrinth of mountains quite inaccessible in many places to the horseman, and partly to remove them to good pasturage, from a locality which the bush fires of the past season had left almost without a blade of grass. The tract of country he was going to is a vast plain, retaining the aboriginal appellation of Manaroo, and is considered to contain some of the best

grazing grounds for horned cattle within the Australian colonies. A rough idea of its situation may be given by observing that it occupies the extreme point of the eastern line of coast; and thus lies coastwise between the eastern and southern settlements. Far above the sea, and utterly bare of forest, over its main expanse, its winter is piercing and desolate. Its extent is such, that in some parts a rider may tire a good horse two days in succession in passing across from bush to bush. But in places, long narrow points of straggling forest stretch out far into the open waste, strangely bewildering the traveller, and rendering the attempt to traverse the ground in foggy weather very dangerous to the inexperienced. Additional peril also arises from the inequality of the ground. No ranges of importance intersect its surface to serve as landmarks at a distance; but irregular hollows of various depth, and little lines of elevated surface no less irregular, present themselves in all directions.

Toward the evening of the fifth day, Reuben Kable suddenly pointed out to his companion the termination of their journey. It was a lonely hut in the depth of the horse-shoe bight they had just entered. From the belt of forest they had passed to that on the opposite side of the bight. seemed little more than a stone's throw, though

the actual distance was about three miles. The hut itself looked like a toy: the capacious stock-yard behind was discernible; but the place did not suggest the idea of a cattle station. The effect of these gigantic plains in this particular is most surprising, especially on the first occasion that the eye is subjected to their enchantment. About another hour brought the wearied men and horses to the little bark hut; the jaded cattle being left to mingle with a few of their new associates, which were grazing with sleek hides and plump carcasses by the big waterhole at the foot of one of the more prominent elevations on the line of the bight. The stockman and hutkeeper were both out, and half a dozen kangaroo dogs came hastily from various quarters to dispute the entrance of the hut with its master; but presently, as one and another recognised him, they changed their barks of defiance into antics and yelps of welcome.

The inhabitant of a town may in some degree imagine the sense of enjoyment which is experienced by the bushman on reaching his own hut in a distant part of the country, after one of these protracted and harassing journeys; but he will still remain ignorant of the delight which is felt on rising next morning after a night's rest, and looking abroad with a feeling that you have now

“free foot in the wilderness:” that your next door neighbour will not complain of your trespassing on him, if you do but circumscribe your operations within a circle of ten miles in diameter. Reuben, however, delayed his friend no longer than the two days necessary for refreshing the horses, before he intimated that he was ready to fulfil his promise.

The tier of the Australian Alps, or, as they are called in the common parlance of the country, the Warragong Mountains, lay now about midway between them and the tract of land, or rather the station, known as the Rocky Springs; and a couple of days’ ride when the horses were fresh was sufficient for reaching the spot. The assistance of a black, however, was requisite to make sure of the most practicable pass through the ranges; and one was soon found, and mounted on the stock-keeper’s spare horse. Once more the young men set out together, with a feeling of familiarity approaching almost to that of brotherhood, and an hourly increasing sympathy: frankness and fearlessness were main elements in the character of both.

The weather continued as it had been for some weeks, till the evening of the day on which they set out; when one of those sudden and complete changes in the state of the atmosphere took place,



to which the whole of this elevated region (particularly at this part) is so subject. As they turned the crown of the gap, up which they had made their way, the black fellow suddenly quickened his pace, with the exclamation, "Murry\* make haste! I believe murry togra† directly." His countryman reined round his horse and cast his eye down the ravine. "He's right, Willoughby; here's a regular fog coming up the gullies as fast as it can sweep: these fogs will soak one through in about an hour as bad as being run through a waterhole. Well, it's no odds: we can't get away from it." Willoughby now turned and looked downward toward the plains. Every object was hidden: the whole of the immense expanse was one rolling sea of mist. Before they could withdraw their eyes from the magnificent spectacle, the deluge of vapour was scaling point after point of the mountain, until it rose in volumes up the very ravine at the brink of which they stood, and, moving with the speed of steam, was over them, around them, and far away beyond them, in a few seconds. Almost in an instant, too, it was at its thickest: not a tree could be seen at twenty feet distant, and the whole of the air around was one wide-spread extent of moving motes of spray.

"Now, Joe the Marine," said the Australian,

\* Very.

† Cold.

addressing his black countryman by his standing title among the whites, "mind you don't take the wrong gully down the mountain."

"Oh, baal (*not*) me stupid, Misser Kable," said the black fellow. "What for you pialla (*talk*) like that?"

"Well, push along: it'll be no joke to camp on the mountain in this fog."

The guide did as he was urged. The road was devious, and in many places precipitous; but he pursued his course with all the unerring instinct of savage life. Before the darkness had established itself amongst the more dense timber of the mountain, the party had issued into the scantier bush and longer lingering light of the low grounds. The black immediately struck across to intersect a road, which soon conducted them once more to a station. Here the horses were hobbled and turned out, and the riders were soon sharing with the stockman and his hut-keeper the ever-welcome pot of tea, and some cold corned beef and damper.

A light rain fell next morning; but it was too trivial to be allowed to impede their progress. About the middle of the afternoon, Willoughby remarked that it was beginning to come down more and more heavily, and bade fair for an evening and night of heavy rain. Reuben, who had

now taken the lead as guide, directed his attention to the mouth of a gully towards which they were advancing, and replied,—“ About a mile and a half will bring us to the station; where we shall be sure of dry house-room and plenty to eat, if it rains for a week.”

A few faint horse-tracks were here and there visible, as they walked their horses up the sharply rising hollow; but there was nothing like the token of traffic to a much or long inhabited spot. Willoughby perceived that they had turned directly into one of the larger ranges of the lowlands; and about half an hour elapsed before they reached the crown of the ridge, where it was lowest: a spot known in bush language as “a gap.” These gaps, or low points of the ridges, are of course taken advantage of, whenever practicable, for crossing a range of hills; and the gap is attained by following up to it the most gently-sloping level, and otherwise unobstructed gully. Beyond the gap the ground again fell, but with an easy declivity: the main line of it was covered by a swamp; so that the horsemen had to keep the edge of the space, where the sapling timber again almost barred their passage. At length, between forcing their way by main strength through the sapling scrub, and jumping the dead trees that lay fallen in all directions athwart the swamp, the

horses made good their way to the bottom. Here the spurs that ran down from the leading ridge, and betwixt two of which was contained the swamp they had followed, terminated in open ground. The Australian rode briskly up on to the hip of the one on the right, and there checking his horse, and facing him toward the clear expanse of the flat in front, awaited the approach of Willoughby.

“ Will that do ? ” he asked ; “ is that anything like what you want ? Here you have a mountain full of good timber at your back ; yonder in front, is just such another range at about half a mile off ; and down below in the flat, runs a creek that might be called a little river, never dry : it comes out of a large semicircle of crags a little higher up to the left, which is the reason the station goes by the name of ‘ the Rocky Springs ; ’ and all the low ground through which it runs, in front of us, is clear of trees, you see, for half a mile above us, and more than as far below. Upwards there, to the left, the clear ground changes only into fine open forest, with scarcely a tree to the acre ; and downwards, to the right, the creek sweeps on, round the point of the hills yonder, through large open flats to the Morrum-bidgee. It’s what I call a first-rate farm for a new settler. Now ! six paces further over the

hip of the hill. There ! what do you say to that for a flat for cultivation ? A complete bay, you see, between this spur of the range and the next : I should think there is a good fifty acres ; and that's cultivation ground enough for any new settler. Yonder is the hut : master and men, I believe, all mess together ; but it's a good big one. It will serve you till you get up another, at all events. And that other hill where the hut is, you see is a bald hill with a fine broad easy face ; just the very spot for a good house by-and-bye : only, for the life of you, if you ever want me to find my way to it when I am out in this part, don't do as I have known two or three nobbs do, lay out carriage-roads to the site of the future mansion before you've got so much as a good slab-hut or a donkey-cart."

There is nothing that causes us to realize the presence and power of a strong practical mind like its achieving, in our very sight, a sound and able project. From this time Willoughby Bracton, though by no means inferior in ability on his own more perilous element, felt an irresistible attraction for Reuben's character : how finally to result will be seen hereafter. As no flattery of thanks was required, so few, simple, and sincere, were those that were rendered.

The young men made their way down and

across the flat, where, as yet, only a few acres were fenced off for agriculture; and once more received the cheerful hospitalities of a bush hut. The owner was absent; and the man in charge was unable to say when he was likely to return from Port Philip district, whither he had proceeded with the main body of his horned cattle. The next day they once more rode off in company; parting, where their roads diverged, with mutual regret; and not till Willoughby had given his promise to make a trip to Broken Bay immediately the affairs of his own family were auspiciously arranged.

Reuben Kable returned to his stock-station at Manaroo, for the purpose of branding his unbranded cattle, and regulating such other portions of his affairs as needed his attention. Willoughby Bracton pursued his journey to Sydney; and it will be conjectured rightly that his report of the station at "the Rocky Springs" was such, that by the middle of the following month his father had completed the purchase.

## CHAPTER III.

Preparations for taking possession of the Farm.—Hiring Hands.—Martin Beck, the Overseer.

THE tide seemed turned ; and Lieutenant Bracton gave himself up to agreeable prognostications. One thing only was annoying ; that he should have landed at Port Philip instead of at Sydney, in the first instance : not so much on account of the little additional trouble and expense, however, as because the beloved sex are apt to be a little intolerant on the point of a change of projects. Unacquainted, by the wearing experience which man undergoes, of the perpetually fresh phases that the business world puts on, they are apt to be disturbed if informed that arrangements which they had set down as permanently settled must be varied : they suppose that the strength of the husband, the father, the brother, can always go straight forward on the prescribed track, whatever the obstacles. It is a pretty superstition, however, and to be favoured whenever it may be prudently done.

In the present case, happily, the apprehension of reproof was not a very heavy one. Mrs. Bracton, if faulty in personal character at all, was so only in being more mild and unassuming than it is altogether desirable that the mother of a family should be. Her niece, Katharine, was also one of nature's happiest efforts to embody an elegant, affectionate, and virtuous womanhood. If the old sea-officer stood at all in fear, it was of his little daughter Marianna; who, being the only daughter, and never deposed by any subsequent claimant from her father's knee, had earned for herself the title of "the spoilt one." But this is all we have to say in impeachment of her claim to everybody's love. Where is the girl that is not lovely at sweet sixteen? Marianna was lovely, not merely because she was sixteen; she was lovely in person, in spirit, and in character. Though not so tall as Katharine, she was of a good height for woman; slim, but rounded in the most generous mould; and a thousand blushes suffused her countenance every day she walked amongst men. Quick in apprehension and thought, with intense susceptibilities and refined taste, she was high and passionate of heart; loving, and, when fit time was, proud—proud as her sire himself had been, and would have fought a ship



as well as he, if she had possessed the requisite title to wear the epaulettes.

Meantime, whilst it must be acknowledged that Lieutenant Bracton occasionally felt little twinges of apprehension as to the reception of this sudden alteration of his plan, let it not be supposed that he had forgotten the magic power of those small but endearing words, "pet," "darling," &c.—words without which our language would be very imperfect: he remembered right well what thousand troubles they had brought him through, betwixt boyhood and grey hairs; and, quietly smiling to himself, was at ease about the matter of "the Rocky Springs."

Willoughby never thought about the point at all: brothers are allowed to be impenetrable to this sort of grievances. Matters of more importance, moreover, now required his attention; and he found that his father's naval habits did not constitute him the most efficient coadjutor in the business in hand. Although much of the *tout ensemble* of the naval officer had worn off the old gentleman during the eight years he had resided on shore, he had acquired no other rural characteristics beyond what we have attributed to his outward appearance: the corners of the flint were worn off, but it could not become a sandstone.

The purchase and transfer of the title to the land completed, the next step was that of hiring such servants as were necessary, and buying a team of bullocks and dray for the conveyance of stores and luggage. Few horse teams, comparatively, are worked on the Australian roads; and the common English waggon also is rarely seen. The conveyance for dead weight—and such is almost all that passes through the country—downwards, of wool, grain, cheese, and butter; upwards, of tea and sugar, furniture, clothing, and similar articles—is almost invariably the dray, a vehicle very similar in construction to our brewers' drays in England, but built somewhat lighter. At times, drays are to be procured in Sydney, at public auctions, considerably below the cost price; and the land-agent advised Willoughby to wait a few days for a sale of farm-stock in the suburbs, which was about to take place.

The servants required were an overseer, a carpenter, a bullock-driver, and three or four labouring hands; these it was decided to secure in the capital, and send on to the farm with the dray: any additional labourers were always procurable on the spot. The labouring population of Australia is almost wholly migratory: individuals rarely attach themselves to one locality, but, at the

termination of the periods for which they hire, wander away to some distant district, or to some neighbouring settler's farm ; either on a plea of discontent or from the desire of change, and, as they say, " to see the country."

Lieutenant Bracton accordingly inserted in one of the papers the common advertisement of a new settler, for so many and such hands. The first that appeared in consequence was a fine and rather handsome young man of American-negro descent, named Martin Beck, who came to offer his services as carpenter. His appearance was much superior to that usual among persons of the same occupation : a peculiarity probably attributable to the circumstance of his being a native of the colony : his mother and father were both convicts, who had been sent hither in the first days of the colony, from different parts of the British Islands : both blacks of American birth, they had married by permission of the governor, whilst still under sentence. It was usual in former times to give well-behaved persons of the prison class, under such circumstances, a free grant of fifty or a hundred acres, together with twelve or eighteen months' ration from the public store to begin with ; and the practice has left an attestation of its excellence, in the confirmed reformation and gradual advancement of

the parties and their families, in at least four cases out of five. If the result in the one instance which now comes under our more direct observation is an exception to the general rule, an amply sufficient reason may be traced in the isolation effected by colour. As Martin Beck grew up, with all the fire of Africa in his veins, he became painfully sensible that he was an alien in his native land. The girls of his country were growing up around him, amidst forest and mountain and river, full of a winning softness rarely met with in the offspring of cities: but none among them for him. For him there was no more from the most kind and considerate lass than a nod of good-humoured condescension, and a "Fine day, Martin: how's your father? how's the old woman?" His attention to his dress, which was much superior to that of other natives of the same rank, intimated clearly that he was quite aware that colour alone was depriving him of the advantage of a fine and, even in some degree, noble person. He wore a blue jacket, with black waistcoat and trousers, of the best material, and evidently the work of one of the first shops in Sydney; black silk handkerchief, white shirt, and Manilla hat; and his boots were always well polished: quite an extraordinary thing for those of his occupation and position

in the colony. Although there was something sinister in the countenance of Martin Beck, it was not that expression which low vices imprint : there was no trace of habitual debauchery of any kind. The acute observer, watching his face for some time, would have perceived a continuous and vigilant endeavour to conceal, under a practised laugh, unbounded avidity, and so much of pure selfishness as the ineradicable instincts of youth render possible. His English was as good as an Englishman's : indeed, but for being intermingled with the idioms of the colony, better than is usually heard among our mechanics at home.

He introduced himself by walking boldly up to Lieutenant Bracton, as he stood at the door of the Royal Hotel, in George-street, and saying, as he slightly raised his hat, " I hear you want a carpenter, captain."

" Yes, my man," said Mr. Bracton. " But what are you? You appear an American : not run away from a ship, I hope?"

" Oh, no, sir; I am a native of the Derwent."

" Surely not one of the aborigines : not one of the bush natives?"

" My parents were Yankees," said the black, with his habitual and instinctive endeavour to

sustain in his own mind, by a false definition, his propinquity to a civilized people.

"Oh, I see," said Lieutenant Bracton, "your father and mother were coloured natives of America, and came to Van Diemen's Land, where you were born."

"Yes. I count myself as good a bushman as there is in the colony, captain. If you are taking a new farm, and we make a bargain, I don't think you'll grumble at the end of the time. I'll hire for six months, or for twelve; or I'll take the work by the piece, or any way you like: only, as I expect to do my work, and can do it as it ought to be done, I must have good wages."

"Well, my man, I'll think about you," said the lieutenant. "Who have you worked for in the colony?"

"I'm but just come up from Hobart Town," said Beck, with a slight degree of hesitation: which, through his stammering a little in his common talk, passed unnoticed.

"What wages shall you want?"

"Five shillings a day, hiring by the month; (no carpenter that is a carpenter has less); and a month's notice before being discharged, or a month's wages. But I'd sooner take the work by the piece: then I can work what hours I like.

Twelve hours is a day's work on wages ; but I'd sooner work the other six than sit yarning in a hut with the riff-raff. And it's always better in my opinion for a settler to pay for his work by the piece ; then he knows what he pays his money for, and a man knows what he has to do for his wages."

Willoughby Bracton came up at the instant. The fine appearance and evident intelligence of the black had made a favourable impression on the lieutenant ; and his son was prepossessed by the sentiment discernible on his father's countenance in Martin's favour.

"This young man," said Lieutenant Bracton, "is a native of the colony by American parents. He wants to hire as carpenter."

"He has the look of a good workman," said Willoughby, after surveying the black for an instant. "I have just met Mr. Moody (the gentleman of whom Lieutenant Bracton had purchased his land) on the wharf. He came up from Port Philip by the vessel that was signalled last night : she put in there. She is the Nautilus, of London. I was telling him we are only waiting for a dray, and he has made me an offer of his ; which is down in Sydney for stores for the farm, and will not now be wanted : I can have it, if we can agree about the price. He says it is

quite a new dray, and there is a team of seven bullocks also,—a shafter, and three pair of yoke oxen.”

“You had better lay hold of that offer, captain,” suggested Martin Beck, “even if you give a little more. There’s nothing like having a team that’s used to a run; they don’t stray: you can get them when you want them. If you take up new bullocks, half your bullock-driver’s time will be spent for months in looking after them, till they get used to the run.”

“That’s true,” said Willoughby; “and it seems to me that it is almost as necessary to have the same driver as to have the bullocks.”

“It all depends” replied Martin, “on whether he’s a good driver. A fresh driver, if he’s a good hand, will soon get used to his team, and they to him; but if he’s a bad one, the sooner he has done with them the better. As for a bullock-driver knowing the run, it’s of very little consequence; a fortnight will put all that to rights. The best thing to do, sir, is to get out of his master whether he’s worth anything, before you make the bargain for the team; and if he is, then offer to buy the team on condition of the man going with them. If he’s a free man, his master can give him up his agreement; and if he’s a prisoner, the master can lend him, if he likes: it’s



not allowed, I suppose; but nobody cares about that. Nobody need "jacket" (*inform against*) himself."

"You seem to have a good knowledge of these matters, carpenter," said the lieutenant; "you can go and look at the dray and team for us, and tell us what it is worth. I dare say we shall engage you."

The black raised his hat slightly, and, observing that the father and son turned aside to talk together, walked to a little distance.

"You've got a man there," said Willoughby to his father, "much better fitted for an overseer, in my opinion, than some raw countryman just come from England."

"He certainly seems a very intelligent fellow; and I have no doubt is well acquainted with all that has to be done on a new farm. We'll hear what he has to say.—Here, my man, step this way—I did not ask your name yet."

"My name is Martin Beck, captain," answered the black, with that slight hesitation of speech which had before insinuated itself into one of his replies: but his habitual stammer prevented it from attracting any special notice.

"Are you capable of acting as overseer on a farm?" inquired Willoughby.

"In respect of the work," replied Martin, "I

consider I could take charge of the largest farm in the country : but I am no scholar."

"I don't see," observed the lieutenant to his son, "that that is of any consequence ; we shall have so few men, that there will be no accounts to keep for a long time. You think, Beck, you could answer for managing the business of the farm in the best way ?"

"I'm sure of that, captain," replied the black ; the misshapen composition of his internal character appearing more distinctly on his features than it had hitherto done, as the vague prospective of greater opportunity arose before him. But the black countenance is only partially amenable to the scrutiny of the white man's eye. It might fairly be taken to be only a rude zeal, arising in contemplation of a benefit about to be conferred, that gave Martin Beck's countenance for a few seconds the sharp and eager look which it put on ; especially as it was immediately followed by an expression of the almost opposite feeling of unwillingness to accept the proffer.

"I think I shall fancy the work best," he said. "I know I'm one of the best bushmen in the colony, captain. I can do every part of the work that is to be done with a piece of wood ; judge the best timber as it stands in the bush ; fell it, cut it up, and turn it to any use, from a shearing-

shed floor to a pannel-door or venetian-blinds. I consider an overseer's berth wouldn't pay me. I'm not afraid of work ; and if I work I can earn twice, if not three times, over what an overseer gets."

The statement was too clear to need any explanation, and too reasonable to admit of being questioned ; while it made still more obvious both the intelligence and the thrifty habits of the man. And coming as these all did along with his smart and well-dressed exterior, it would have been an unnatural exercise of caution, if Lieutenant Bracton and his son had not begun to accord him a considerable degree of confidence. The lieutenant, in particular, looking at him with the eye of a naval officer, felt more disposed to secure him in his service than any other man he had yet cast his eyes on in traversing the country. To Willoughby, also, there seemed a sort of incongruity in having a shrewd, experienced native of the colony on the farm, under some such stupid crawling pretender as he had seen in many places invested with the office of overseer. After a few minutes' thought, he said, turning to Martin Beck,—

"Suppose we agree with you by the job, for such work as we find we want done as we go on, at the current rate given by the nearest settlers ;

and give you in addition to what you earn thus, —twenty pounds a year for the time you occupy from your own work in superintending things generally. That, you know, is a third of a full salary of an overseer; and you will not lose more than a third of your time in the duties.”

“That ’ll do, sir,” said the black, in an instant. “Am I to take the agreement to be made?”

This was assented to: his employers only stipulating that it should be a six months’ agreement merely; that they might have the opportunity of terminating or renewing it, according as they found it suit them at the end of that period.

“When do you want me to start, captain?” inquired the black.

“As soon as the dray and the rest of the men are procured,” was the reply.

“That may be to-day,” said Beck, “if you can find the owner of the dray again. The men I can hunt up for you in two hours.”

“Why, I thought,” observed the lieutenant, “that labouring men were so scarce here.”

“Not in Sydney,” said Beck. “There’s always a mob here who have come down the country to spend their money; and when its gone they must be off. There’s only one turn-pike gate for the interior: just walk out and stop there a couple of hours, and you’ll have the pick

of a score every day ; shepherds, tradesmen, and men that never were men yet ; good men and crawlers. I never want to look at a man twice to know what he is."

"And do you think, Martin," asked Lieutenant Bracton, "that out of such a crew as that, you can get good men ; such men as I want?"

"Working hands are working hands, up the country or down," replied the black. "The only difference I can see is, that everywhere there are some who are emigrants, and some who are freedmen : the emigrants are flats, and the others are sharps. Of the two, I think the sharps are a great deal best worth their wages ; they want good looking after, but there 's something to be got out of them. The emigrants they send over here always seem more dead than alive, till they 've been five or six years in the country ; then they begin to be like the rest of the people."

"I don't want," said the lieutenant, rather peremptorily, "to make a station for a den of thieves."

"There 's no need for that, captain," said Beck, with a slight discomposure. "The convicts, after they get free, are generally honest enough. In fact, there 's nothing for them to steal, unless they break into a settler's stores ; and that is not worth their while, for what they would get. Nine out

of ten of the freed men, or more than that, have set it down that honesty is the easiest game." And here the black fell again into the hesitating utterance already mentioned: but it appeared rather an attempt to overcome his stammering by a more deliberate pronunciation of the words, so regularly were they measured, than the result of any inward confusion.

"At all events," said Willoughby, speaking to his father, "the dray might be off to-morrow. Some stores will be required, however. What is it customary to take up to a new station, Martin? There is a large rough hut already on the ground."

Martin Beck proceeded to name the customary provision made. "If the team is a strong one, sir," he said, addressing Willoughby as the party it appeared he was now to deal principally with, "it will save a journey to Sydney and back in the middle of winter, when the rivers will very likely be up, if you take six months' stores at once. How many hands will there be in all?"

"Five of ourselves," was Willoughby's reply. "And now I think of it, lest I should not recollect it again, the first thing you do, must be to divide that hut off; leaving half as it is, and turning the other half into two small rooms, boarded all round as close as you can fit the boards, for

my mother and sisters. And then, if you have time, run up two small huts toward the end of the hill; one of them for yourself and me, and one of them for the men."

"Very good, sir," said Beck. "You asked about stores. Five of your own family, you say: how many besides?"

"Yourself, the bullock-driver, and three labouring hands. You can find them, and bring them here in the course of the day."

"Ten in all:—about four hundredweight of sugar; a chest, or chest and half of tea; fifty or sixty pounds of tobacco (every man almost smokes, captain, here). As to beef, I suppose you mean to buy that, standing, up the country. The quantity of flour depends on the ration you allow the men; some give eight pounds of flour, some ten. Then there are tools and slop-clothing, and nails, and cooking utensils, and a number of other things."

The detail had already bewildered the parties to whom it was addressed, so far, that Willoughby inquired if a list of the usual supplies for a new station could not be procured. In reply, Martin Beck said that he should wish to select for himself, from an ironmonger's store, such implements as were necessary in his own duties and for the business of the farm; and that for the rations and

stores at large, it was the common and easiest way to give the usual order to some one of the dealers in general merchandize with which the city abounds. That plan therefore was adopted. Martin Beck received an order to one of the large ironmongers to allow him to select for Lieutenant Bracton whatever goods he thought proper, together with authority to choose and bring for approval the necessary men; and Willoughby proceeded to give instructions to one of the general agents to prepare the stores.



## CHAPTER IV.

Starting of the Party.—The Dray Bogged—John Thomas the Bullock-driver. — A Visit from the Natives. — Finishing the Hut.

MARTIN BECK'S task was well and promptly performed. That night, three able, decent, and serviceable men were brought to his employer and hired. Any other than a sea-officer might have been surprised to hear from each of them in succession a request for "an advance;" but it was such a well-known custom of the lieutenant's own profession that it occasioned no surprise. Almost invariably the part of the population that have been convicts seem only to earn that they may spend their money again in thoughtless extravagance. Many no doubt would do otherwise if the sale of small parcels of land was customary; for those who, through the considerate benevolence of some old master, have the opportunity of running a few head of cattle on his land are often found making that investment of their wages. The generality, however, having no such facility for

turning their earnings into property, and unable to resist the extraordinary temptation to dissipation from a large amount of ready cash in their pockets, soon make away with the proceeds of their labour. The capital and its amusing scenes is naturally chosen for the "spree," in preference to the solitary bush public-house; and hence the daily file of penniless stragglers which Martin Beck had spoken of, as capable of furnishing in a couple of hours as many good men as were required. Every labouring man proceeding to the interior passes out of the city by the turnpike; and nine out of every ten go out with empty pockets: or, at the best, with no more than sufficient to carry them so far on the road as where the more hospitable habits of the interior commence.

Willoughby was also successful in arranging for the purchase of the dray and bullocks; provided his overseer considered the stipulated price a fair one. Beck, on viewing them, decided that nothing of equal value could be got for less, except by unusual accident. The bullock-driver turned out to be a ticket-of-leave man; that is, a prisoner who has served a sort of punitory portion of his sentence, and having done so without serious misconduct has entered upon what may be described as a probationary period, during

which he holds an official document authorizing him to work for his own advantage within a prescribed district. The man in question, holding his ticket already for the district in which 'the Rocky Springs' was situated, although engaged for twelve months, could not be compelled to accompany his master anywhere beyond it, except as a mere driver actually on a journey; and, being still a prisoner, could not, even if willing, go with him to Port Philip. He therefore naturally chose to pass along with his team into the service of Mr. Bracton. His master gave him a high character for trustworthiness; but added, "You must let him have his own way with his bullocks. He's a Welshman: very faithful, to be depended upon in anything; but as obstinate as a mule."

Next day by noon, the dray was laden with its tools, and stores, and rations, for the journey; and the three "advances" had probably been sent by various publicans to be set to their account at one of the banks. The party about to proceed to the hut under Diandulla Mountain, slowly but steadily began to wend its way over the hot, red, dusty hills out of Sydney towards the interior; by the road on which, some sixty miles further forward, Lieutenant Bracton and his son had encountered their friendly adviser.

The emigrant to a new country, if he have any taste for active life, will generally meet with plenty to gratify it in the necessity for action which is perpetually imposed upon him by the motion of things around ; especially during the earlier stages of his undertaking. The late proprietor of the farm called on Lieutenant Bracton in the course of the same day, offering him for purchase, as a convenience to both parties, a small number of cattle still upon the farm ; amongst which were some of his best milch cows, reserved in case the ground was not disposed of. The offer being accepted, and the price fixed, it was necessary that some one should be there to receive them and give an acquittance ; but as Mr. Moody proceeded by Port Philip by an early vessel, and thence on horseback, he expected to be there long before the overseer and dray. The young man, therefore, had once more to determine on an almost immediate journey into the interior. His father chose to proceed by the same vessel with Mr. Moody, to rejoin his family at Port Philip.

It was now the month of April, one of the seasons at which the colony is often visited by very inclement weather. Before Willoughby's preparations for his journey were completed, heavy rain set in, which continued without intermission for several days ; but, unwilling to fail in his appoint-

ment, he at length set out. The road traverses many a high exposed hill and open tract of ground, rendering the journey itself in such weather far from a pleasant one. But the most unwelcome part of his expedition arose from the condition of the roads. Excellent in summer, from the scientific care with which they have been marked out and laid down, they had as yet acquired no solidity from age; and teams were to be seen camped in several places, from want of force of bullocks to overcome the additional difficulty of draught caused by the settled rain. On arriving at Lupton's Inn, however, he had the satisfaction of learning that his party were on a-head, having passed the day before; and after dinner he once more started for the twenty-mile stage that would complete a third part of his journey.

He now hoped to find the party camped, as usual, somewhere on the road-side, towards the end of his own day's stage: they would then be past the worst portion of their journey. Leading up from the further edge of Mittagong flats, where Reuben Kable had refreshed his cattle at noon on the day that Willoughby became his fellow-traveller, a great range of mountain rises, known as the Mittagong range. The ascent of the road is not regular and even throughout, but rather over a series of steppes alternating with declivities.

The drainage from the declivities falls and rests on the intermediate level spaces, the upper soil of which is only the light sediment thus accumulated from the water through ages past; those spaces, therefore, though level, are the worst parts of the whole ascent. The drays in wet seasons bog up to the axle; sometimes one wheel going right down suddenly, sometimes both; whilst the poor animals themselves, in their efforts to force their way forward, only drive down their feet deeper into the marshy soil, and flounder about till their hearts fail them, and they give up the struggle. Once fairly baffled in this way, even a good set of bullocks will refuse to pull again.

To the young settler's dismay, such was the predicament in which he found his own team, as he rode up the range. The evening was fast setting in, the rain falling thick and cold, and the wind, which had blown fresh in the low grounds, blowing still more boisterous and dismal on this bleak elevation; the dray was stuck in the centre of a bog, down nearly to the axle, and the ground cut up in all directions in the struggle to get it out; the bullocks were standing a little way off in the bush, all huddled together in their yokes, and hanging their heads, knocked up and baffled; the men sitting on the dead logs by the road-side. The straightforward self-dependence and obstinacy

of the Welshman, as might easily have been foreseen, was in full antagonism with the assumption and conceited forwardness of Beck ; and the feud was fairly begun, which was to take so wide a latitude, and produce such serious consequences before it came to an end : it had been burning with growing but smothered activity from the first hour the men came into contact, now it was in unconcealed blaze.

“ Come,” said Beck, shortly before Willoughby rode up ; “ don’t keep us here all night. Try the bullocks again.”

“ It ’ood be a good job for you to earn your dinner as well as the poor beasts has, my man,” retorted the Welshman. There was then a short pause ; when one of the hands Beck had procured walked over to him and said something in an undertone. “ Ay,” replied Beck aloud ; “ he’ll pitch it that he’s careful about the captain’s cattle ; when it’s only his own surly temper.”

At this juncture, Willoughby came in sight, and, slackening his pace as he perceived the disaster, rode over towards the overseer, who was standing on one side of the road, whilst the bullock-driver was sitting on a log at the other.

“ Why, you’re fast enough, Martin,” said Willoughby.

“ So John Thomas says, sir,” replied the overseer; “ he knows best whether seven such bullocks as yours are, oughtn’t to pull that load about a couple of yards. There’s good ground within six feet, and this is the last bad place there is: the top of the range is just round the corner of that bit of scrub.”

“ Oh, you must have another try, Thomas,” said Willoughby, after riding across and examining the ground.

“ No,” said the Welshman; “ I ’ood never flog a bullock when I know the poor beast has done all she can.”

Further importunities on the part of Willoughby only led to further and more dogged refusals on the part of the Welshman, interspersed with more bitter gibes on the part of Martin.

John Thomas at length got up, and, throwing down his whip, went over to the dray and began to loosen the ropes ready for unloading. “ Come, my man in the blue jacket,” he said, as soon as he had rolled off the tarpaulin; “ do what you can: it isn’t much.” Beck, thus summoned, was obliged to join the three men who were waiting to help to unload. This was soon performed, and the cattle once more tried. But in vain: no two of them could be got to pull together; nor did the



driver seem to try very hard to make them. Once more he unloosed them from the now empty dray, and began doggedly to take off a couple of sheets of bark, which had been laid under the load, and three or four loose planks that served as additional cross pieces; throwing at the same time the axe to one of the men, and directing him to cut ten or a dozen small saplings, and lay across in front of the wheels, to form a solid course for them to the good ground. Laying the planks under the dray with the bark on them, he then placed himself underneath the hinder part in a crouching posture, and heaved it up by main force, notwithstanding the hold of the mud, and there held it whilst the wheels were blocked up underneath.

Thus extricated, Willoughby left them to pursue their way on to the best camping-place within reach that night. John Thomas and the overseer had no further communication: except when the one chose to give some dictatorial and harassing order, and the other, to shew how much of it he could venture, with safety to his ticket-of-leave, to set at defiance.

By two more days' ride Willoughby reached the station, before the late owner had arrived. And when the weather cleared, he had an opportunity of taking a more leisurely survey than he

yet had done of the future home of his family : and, as he supposed, of himself.

Three days elapsed before Mr. Moody reached his late station ; and two more were occupied in searching for and delivering the whole of the cattle. Several other articles, useless to the departing occupant, or too cumbersome to transport, but indispensable to the new residents, were also treated for : the steel-mill for grinding wheat, some sieves, the remainder of a small stack of unthrashed wheat, sundry iron-pots, &c., and a light cart used for carrying rations to out-stations ; which, as the owner had only the horse he rode with him, it was as convenient to him to get rid of, as it was to his successor to obtain. The man who had been hut-keeping during the absence of Mr. Moody was allowed his choice of going with his old master to the new settlements, or having his agreement given up to him and engaging with the new comer. As new comers have the reputation of possessing plenty of money, and expending it freely, he chose the latter. Mr. Moody remained some days, engaged in winding up his various connections of business with other settlers in that quarter of the country ; and when not so engaged, making himself at home with Willoughby.

In the mean time, the dray reached its destina-

tion. After the stores were housed, and a day had been spent in resting, Martin Beck began to get his tools in order, and give directions to the men. Willoughby was gratified at hearing a favourable opinion expressed of him by so active and penetrating a man as the late owner of the ground. "That overseer of yours is a smart fellow with his tools," said Mr. Moody; "but a shocking dirty colour: he'll frighten all the cattle off the run."

"It's only the native blacks, sir," said one of the men who was standing by, "that the cattle are afraid of; and I dare say it's more because they're without clothes, than because of their colour. I saw Mr. Beck in the yard among the cattle, and they did not seem more afraid of him than of a white man. He's a good hand among cattle: he roped a young bullock, that he wanted yoked in place of the one that's footsore, after it had hunted the bullock-driver and Warraghi Bill, and everybody else out of the yard."

"Well, that's something," said Mr. Moody: "Warraghi is a bold hand himself among cattle. Still I shouldn't like to meet Mr. Beck of a dark night, myself, among the ranges."

"And are the cattle really frightened at the natives?" inquired Willoughby.

"I imagine not exactly?" replied Mr. Moody,

“ it has always appeared to me more like aversion which they manifest, than fear : they gallop about, and snort and toss their heads. Cattle are very keen of scent, and there is such an insufferable odour encircling these native blacks, that possibly their antics are only an expression of irritation.”

“ The natives appear a very degraded race,” observed Willoughby.

“ About the settlements, they are undoubtedly : but in their primitive state I have always felt inclined to think them far less vicious than the mass of civilized society. In fact, in their primitive state I can observe very little of what we commonly call vice amongst them. The ugliness, too, for which they have such a standing character, assumes only its common proportion among the tribes which remain in their natural condition. Some of the men are as fine samples of frame and muscle as could be found ; and I have seen young girls among them with the finest contour and the most brilliant eyes imaginable. But they are old soon after twenty years of age : the glow of their youth, like the day of their clime, seems to pass suddenly away, without a twilight.”

So far as the mechanical duties of his overseership went, Martin Beck deserved the encomium he had extorted. Mr. Moody soon afterwards

took his leave. There being as yet but the one hut (the late proprietor was a bachelor), common lodging and a common mess were the order of the day. However, in the course of a few days a wandering tribe of natives pitched their camp on the opposite side of the creek. They were what are called "civilized blacks"—one of the tribes who had been for several years in connection with the Europeans. The young emigrant had thus the fullest opportunity of extending his circle of acquaintance; and, whether he felt it agreeable or not, he must at all events have found it amusing, to come in to his hut and find that, ample as it was, the floor was completely covered every day at dinner-time by his black guests. Half a dozen 'gins' with their pickaninnies were crouched in the chimney, not only beside, but even behind the fire. And on every stool, and where the stools failed seated cross-legged upon the ground, the sages of the tribe furnished, in some instances, specimens of the most recondite and well-nigh incredible ugliness; whilst outside the door the younger men and boys stood or sprawled on the ground, talking over their own affairs, and seeming rather like an appendage to the visit of the tribe, than personally much interested in it.

This state of things, however, did not last many days. Beck, with the smartness that marked all

he did, having first consulted his employer, divided a seven-foot section off from the large hut, and again dividing that into two, with an intermediate passage, lined each of the apartments thus formed with the sound, dry bark of the roof—a much more impervious lining than fresh-cut boards, which would soon have shrunk with the heat of the hut, leaving interstices. He also re-covered the roof with new bark cut by the natives. In a few more days he had a sufficient quantity of slabs split, and other bush-stuff ready, for the construction of two common huts—one for the men, and the other for Willoughby Bracton and himself. The hutkeeper who had been taken on was made stockman, as best knowing the run; one of the hands brought up the country succeeded him as cook; the other two helped Beck in the bush; and Willoughby, tucking up his shirt-sleeves, went as bullock-driver's mate, along with John Thomas.

A special messenger at length arrived from Sydney, bearing a letter from Lieutenant Bracton to his son. The ladies, as Willoughby had expected they would do, had unanimously declared in favour of occupying their bush residence without delay. The expenses they had already incurred amounted to a large sum; “indeed,” as Katharine suggested, “to the price of a flock of sheep.”

Willoughby and his mate, therefore, had to haul in the remainder of the stuff for the huts as speedily as possible. And once more John Thomas set off down the road for a load of luggage, and such articles of furniture as were necessary to render this domestic transition tolerable to the less hardy subjects of it.

## CHAPTER V.

Arrival of the Ladies at "the Rocky Springs."—A neighbourly visit.—Police Magistrate.—Morgan Brown, the Stockman.

MORNING at length came—a bright sunny morning, whose warmth was only chequered, not broken, by the light fluttering airs that blew across the plain, or rather park-like forest, between the township of Ghiagong and Diandullah Mountain—when Willoughby, in his usual straightforward, business way, was seen conveying three ladies in the little green ration-cart towards the Rocky Springs. The elder of them, Mrs. Bracton, was far past middle age, with an expression of intelligence, benevolence, and firmness, on a face not without furrows, but evidently in days gone by a handsome one; her hair was raven black, streaked with a few of silver hairs; and her dress was almost that of a quakeress. Indeed, except for the tasteful bonnet and veil, she might have been mistaken for one, for she was a woman



of quiet manners and few words. The youngest of the triad, and who sat beside the driver, was of the earliest age to which the courtesy of the other sex accords the coveted rank of womanhood : she was the elder lady's daughter, Marianna ; and her dress was handsome enough for the fashionable streets of London. There was a decision in everything she did and said, that, whilst it partook in no degree of immodesty, indicated a strong personal will. Her companion, whom she frequently turned back to and addressed in a fond and winning tone as "sister," though she was her cousin Katharine, more resembled Mrs. Bracton in external appearance. Her stature was that of a full-grown and graceful woman ; her age, perhaps twenty, and her dress simple and elegant. The eyes of Katharine were a rich and placid hazel, in which only the most sound and unwavering health prevented repose from passing into languor ; the brows were fine and beautifully arched, and their lashes distinct without being obtrusive. Fine auburn hair hung, like two rich clusters of the grape, on either side of a face without fault in fairness and in form. She spoke but little, any more than Mrs. Bracton ; except when Marianna turned towards her those arch gray eyes, and secured her attention. On these occasions, the brief and simple, but just, re-

plies of Katharine, whilst they seemed sometimes to astonish and disconcert Marianna for an instant, were yet uttered with no more than the affectionate and forbearing dignity of a superior.

The ladies had been attended by Lieutenant Bracton to the nearest point to the Rocky Springs made by the mail; from thence the duty of conducting them to their future home was deputed to Willoughby: his father having passed on some distance across the country to inspect a couple of flocks of sheep, for which he was in treaty with one of the large flock-masters.

The attitude and demeanour of the fair exiles portrayed not inadequately their various sentiments in their new circumstances;—Marianna, with her inexhaustible fund of animal spirits and active intelligence, almost losing all sentiment in the novel impressions of the scenes and objects around, and in curiosity as to what might yet meet her gaze; Katharine, timidly declining sympathy with things so strange, but far more happy than any such feeling of interest could make her, in the still rapture of reverie felt by the soul that resigns itself with unflinching trust to the guidance of duty; and Mrs. Bracton, as all her life she had been, ordinary in her thoughts, innocently correct in her purposes, never so much as dreaming that

there was any other way to walk in than that where she was in company with her husband and her children. If any faint desire of other than what really existed occasionally flickered before her mind's eye, it was the wish that Katharine would be a little more talkative, and Marianna a little less so : but that, the latter young lady herself, whenever her mother was so unlucky as to express such a wish, insisted was prudery, and felt herself much wronged by the covert imputation.

By this time the occupants of the Rocky Springs had been shown, by the two old hands (the Welshman and the hutkeeper), a way round the point of the lower end of the range, where the creek turned off towards the Morrumbidgee. Along this road, not known to Reuben Kable, Willoughby now approached the station. The journey from Ghiagong had been across all the ups and downs of the grassy surface of the bush : for as yet, though that was the nearest township, no other way-marks assisted the traveller to his course than three or four faint dray-tracks in the green sward ; and, where those failed, occasionally a sight of the distant mountain, behind which the farm was situated. The horse being fagged (for in bush-driving one has to go over many logs and even fallen trees) with the weight of the travellers, and the portion of their luggage that was indispen-

sable to them, was suffered to walk at his ease up the creek side and round the point of the bald hill, which Reuben Kable had indicated as a good site for a house. As they passed along its base at a few yards distant, Willoughby pointed it out, adding the comment of his friend. The gaze of Mrs. Bracton turned with more interest than any she had yet shown for the surrounding scenery, and even with a different interest from any she had yet felt, towards the object pointed out. Marianna glanced at it, and remarked, "We have come all this way to enjoy a rural habitation, and such we will now have." But Willoughby had spoken with so much enthusiasm of his Australian friend, that Katharine, if she did no more, wondered whether this friend of Willoughby's with the quaker-like name and the sound judgment which had assisted them so materially at a perplexing crisis, possessed also the corresponding simplicity of character, so intimate in its connection with moral rectitude. The consequence was, that the little green cart was at the hut door before Katharine was sensible of any further features of the locality.

The hut before which they now stood lay deep in the nook: indeed, nearly at the extremity of its lower side, and a little way up the acclivity of the hill, on a natural flat. One spur of the mountain

rose higher and higher from the spot, running gradually to the height of the main range ; but, in the opposite direction, falling gradually down to the low, round, bald point they had passed by, and so down into the plain. In front of them, a similar and parallel spur ran in like manner from the ridge of the main mountain down to within about the same distance of the creek ; whose waters rolled deep, and rapid, and flashing in the sunbeams along in front of the nook, at some fifty paces from the points of the hills. The nook or bight itself, thus formed by the two spurs from the mountain, contained about fifty acres ; of these about ten or a dozen at its inner end were fenced off, by a line of rails running from one hill directly across to the other, and were still covered with the stubble of the last crop. The remainder of the bight was still under grass, kept close cropped by the home cattle ; and, stimulated by the late varied weather, it was now covered with the bright green of the rapid vegetation of the climate. Beyond the stream, the open and somewhat melancholy plain wore the russet hue of the ripened herbage, rather than that of the new that was shooting up amongst it. And beyond the plain again another mountain rose, terminating the prospect : here, exhibiting trees of glorious verdure ; there, with the sunlight sleeping on its

bare bosom ; in some places showing great faces of square crag, and again in others the dark mouths of the ravines.

The hut itself was constructed of rough, upright slabs of split timber, about seven feet high, roofed with bark, and covering an area of about twenty feet in length by fourteen in width, with the door in the middle of one of the longer sides, and the chimney in the middle of one of the shorter: or rather the chimney, which was merely an inclosure slabbed similarly to the hut itself, occupied nearly the whole of one end—that next to the main range. All round it, the ground was bare with the constant tread of man and beast. About forty or fifty yards lower down, towards the creek, were to be seen the two smaller new huts just put up ; and still nearer to the bald point of the hill a strong and extensive stockyard, or inclosure of six-rail fence for confining cattle.

The lively curiosity of the sex soon, however, turned to the more grave task of exploring the interior of their habitation. As yet there was no more than the economical and enduring floor which the first family of our race in their ignorance supposed was all there needed to be. The hut door opened into a good-sized room, at the further end of which a three-log fire blazed merrily, and none the less so that the sky had

begun to get cloudy and the wind chill; but another door in a partition which ran across the hut opened into a little passage, on either hand of which were the apartments that Willoughby had had so carefully constructed for the elder and younger ladies respectively. There was no other window than an opening through the slabs, like a ship's port, but provided with a wooden shutter, fastening on the inside. Marianna, at the first glimpse, drew back; a slight shadow supplanting the usual vivacity of her countenance. Katharine completed her survey with an evident increase of cheerfulness, as if she had become relieved of that vague apprehension which clear but timid minds have of the indefinite.

The ladies made their first meal in the prevailing fashion of the bush, paying their host many compliments on the felicity with which he performed the services of the buttery. After their repast, Willoughby escaped the waggery of his standing tormentor by carrying off his pilot-coat and other personal property to his own hut, but not without inviting himself to return to tea; at which meal it may be supposed that no surprise he could feel, or even feign, would be thought unearned by the fair reformers. All the tin pots were ranged upside down in a solid square in the darkest corner

of the hut ; and a favourite co-emigrant cat was teaching her kittens to lap milk out of the best tin meat-dish. There was wood on the fire, certainly ; but it looked as if it had been fetched out of the bush with a pair of parlour tongs ; whilst outside old Cæsar, the bull-dog, stood a wary distance off, on legs like four posts, stretching out his head one way and his tail the other, with his eyes fixed on the door—which was now shut in his face for the first time within his remembrance—as if he were resolved to look through it. Meantime, crockery and glass, eau de cologne and scented pocket-handkerchiefs, hair pins and tortoiseshell combs, India shawls, furred mantles, and small aprons almost triangular, were to be seen in all directions, looking like the trappings of a haughty satraps in possession of the conquered province of some barbaric empire. Indeed, it was incredible what a variety of operations the two gentle creatures had accomplished in that short time. They had, however, in some measure atoned for other things by getting their bandboxes and trunks into their own more absolute domain, and leaving sufficient room in the hut to move about in. In the course of the evening, Lieutenant Bracton reached home with a guide ; but it was so late as only to give him an opportunity, on his first visit to his station, of feeling the pleasantness of the change from a seat



in the saddle on a damp evening in the bush to one by a cheerful three-log fire in a rainproof hut.

On inspecting his purchase next day, he fully assented to his son's views of its suitableness and value. Katharine and Marianna, also, were not long, after the grass was pronounced to be dry, before they made Willoughby their pilot to the semicircle of crags, about a mile higher up the flat, off and out of which the main body of the stream finds its way. Of an evening Marianna could give herself up to all the revel of her heart; hemmed in by the dark mountains, as the moon rose, first shining against the opposite heights and then lighting them up further and further down, till it appeared at last over the hill behind the hut, and looked down at the very spot where she stood. Her more timid cousin loved better the sweet and fragrant morning, and a walk to the hill top, the unuttered and unutterable hymn of the pious and pure.

Nearly six weeks elapsed before the return of the dray with the furniture selected for immediate use. John Thomas fully made good his title to the character he had received; everything was there, and uninjured, except by so much as injury is unavoidable to furniture in bush transport. John Thomas's still more important charge, the housemaid, also expressed herself perfectly satis-

fied with the accommodations she had experienced on the road. It is customary for the bullock-driver to spread the tarpaulin over the dray, so as to form a complete tent, the area of which is the space underneath between the wheels. This being *de jure* the driver's own nocturnal retreat, he is supposed, when accompanied by a female, to consign it to the entire control of his passenger, together with his bedding; making the best shift his wit and good fortune may enable him to do for himself.

The arrival of the family in this solitary part of the country had not been altogether unhailed by neighbours. Ghiagong township is about ten miles, perhaps twelve, from the Rocky Springs. Within about a mile of the township resided Lieutenant Bracton's nearest neighbour; and the first also from whose farm a visitor to his family set forth. It was Mrs. Smart, the lady of the settler in question, who was so considerate. After the few first days' novelty, and till habit rectified it, the bush was felt to be lonesome; Mrs. Bracton and the young ladies, therefore, were quite delighted as one fine day about noon, they pointed out to each other a lady on horseback, in a light umber-coloured habit, riding slowly up the road from the point of the hill toward the hut. The horse had an awkward trick—unless, indeed, it were occa-

sioned by the rider's method of managing the bridle—of holding his mouth aloft and wide open, as if perpetually endeavouring to swallow the bit. Behind the lady, at some distance, rode a servant, in a blue jacket but no waistcoat, a pair of Parra-matta trousers, without stockings or gaiters, unpolished lace-ups, and a hat. No gentleman being at hand to assist the lady in alighting, and the man in waiting having stopped to have a yarn at the men's hut door, she almost tumbled over the back of the chair that had been brought out to assist her descent, and was near breaking Marianna's back in recovering herself. The visitor hastened to announce herself to Mrs. Bracton, as “Mrs. Smart, Mem—of Smartville, Mem—near Ghiagong, Mem.” Although Mrs. Bracton could not comprehend precisely what particular of the definition was conveyed by the syllable ‘*mem*,’ she cordially invited her kind and considerate neighbour into her poor habitation. Marianna, whose experience of the manners of their visitor had been so suddenly acquired, stood with compressed lips till ‘Mrs. Smart, of Smartville, near Ghiagong,’ was well into the hut; and then the poor girl, unable any longer to contain herself, almost shrieked into Katharine's ear, “Oh! sister; she has almost broken my back.”

Katharine whose heart had all the tenderness

of a child's, put her arm round her cousin and led her on one side of the hut, saying all she could devise in palliation of Mrs. Smart's awkwardness; and when Marianna had overcome the strain, they began to think of going in to make better acquaintance with their neighbour: but Mrs. Smart's volubility became so distinguishable, that they both paused as if by a common instinct.

"I am so glad you have come to this part of the country, Mem. I'm so in want of a female friend; oh! you can't think, Mem." (Here there was a pause; which not eliciting the expected rejoinder, the visitor resumed with great pathos.) "Husbands, Mem, have got their faults, that nobody knows of but their wives. I am sure you must have felt it yourself, Mrs. Bracton, Mem."

Marianna turned with uplifted hands to her cousin, and exclaimed, "Is n't that awful? What will mama do! We had better go in to her." But before she came to the rescue of her mother, the lady of Smartville was heard again.

"The two young ladies your daughters, Mem?"

"One of them is my daughter, the other my niece," said Mrs. Bracton.

"The short young lady your niece, I suppose?"

"No, Mrs. Smart," replied Mrs. Bracton, with a very carefully-modulated tone. "The tallest of them is my niece."

“Oh! I see, Mem; a poor relation. We ought to take care of our poor relations. Makes me ask, I’ve got poor relations of my own. I send home my little boy’s cast shoes and frocks every year reg’lar (that is, when I can find anybody that’s going) to my sister. She’s getting a family, Mem, without end, poor thing! I sometimes think she’ll never be done. Now, I’ve only got one. But, oh! such a boy, Mem!”

Marianna, having a little regained her equanimity after being libelled as short, now straightened herself as well as Mrs. Smart’s token of attachment permitted her, and followed Katharine in, to the great relief of Mrs. Bracton. Katharine seated herself by their visitor, with the view of engaging her from further annoying her aunt; Marianna sat down opposite beside her mother. The pain of the wrench struck her again as she sat down, and her countenance became alternately flushed and pale.

“Dear me, Mem!” exclaimed their visitor, “that young lady looks very bad.”

“My dear!” said Mrs. Bracton in alarm, “what is the matter with you?”

“Only a little faint with the heat of the day, mama.”

“Oh! fainting fits, Mrs. Bracton. No conse-

quence, you know. I was the same myself. A little sal-volatile's a good thing."

"Mrs., Smart," said Katharine, who saw that something must be done to bring the present state of affairs to as early a conclusion as possible, and had risen and set the tray with some refreshments; "you have a long way to ride back, and the days are getting very short, now; pray make a hearty lunch before you set off."

Mrs. Smart hastened with alacrity to take Katharine at her word. "I suppose, you haven't got a gherkin, Miss," she, however, inquired almost immediately.

"No, we have not," said Katharine. "We have yet only just what we could get into our boxes, coming by the mail."

"Oh!" proceeded Mrs. Smart, "you can get anything you want at the township. They have everything at the stores, from a needle to an anchor. He's an old Jew, Miss, that keeps it. Such an ugly old man! I wonder the prisoners some of these nights don't break in and murder him, and take all he's got. But there, it's no use talking: the devil's children will have the devil's luck. They're a dreadful set, Mem, these convicts: you must flog, flog, flog, or else they'll do nothing. There's nothing too hot nor too heavy for them: anything that's an inch high,

or an hour old, only leave it in their way, and I'll go bail you never clap eyes on it again."

Mrs. Smart was still proceeding with her descant, when Lieutenant Bracton was descried approaching.

"Here's papa!" exclaimed Marianna.

"Yes, Mem; it's what made me come and see you, that I heard as your good gentleman was a leeftennant. Mr. Smart, Mem, will have great pleasure to do him the honour of making his acquaintance: but, deary me, I ought to say Leeftennant Smart, now your good gentleman's come among us; but I've got so in the way of saying Mister, Mister, since we've been out of the army, and up here among these settlers, that it always goes out of my head."

At this instant Lieutenant Bracton entered. The old gentleman was, both by nature and principle, too kind hearted willingly to wound the feelings of any one, much less of a neighbour and a woman, for the neighbourly and womanly action of trying to enliven the early solitude of his household; but it required all his self-command and tenacity of purpose to retain his post inoffensively.

Before Mrs. Smart rose to leave, however, something had strangely altered the style of her conversation. She never came again. And Mr. Smart himself, a very plain, worthy man, when

Mr. Bracton met him in the township sometime afterwards, made no hesitation in acknowledging that he had received his commission for a long course of good conduct in the ranks, and had at length made the best of his means by establishing himself as a settler.

In the course of five or six days afterwards, another neighbour appeared at the hut door of "the Rocky Springs." A great clatter of horses' hoofs was heard coming rapidly down the hill through the bush, while the ladies were at dinner by themselves. Their brother and father being out on horseback, it was supposed to be them; and Marianna, ever eager to greet her father's approach, rose and ran to the door, and was flying out with her usual joyous welcome, when, to her infinite surprise, there sat still on his horse, in the act of leaning forward to knock on the door with the handle of his whip, a young gentlemanly person of about two-and-twenty, with piercing black eyes, which instantly met hers.

"You supposed it was your father, Miss Bracton," said the horseman, with a smile which he evidently tried to suppress. "Don't let me disturb you; you are probably at dinner?" Katharine now came forward to her cousin's side, as Marianna drew back. "The business of my ill-timed inroad, ladies," said the horseman, who



they now saw had heavy pistols at his holsters, and a couple of mounted troopers in his rear, "is to say, that if you will give my constables and horse-police a night's quarters in one of your huts when they come this way, they shall always do so when they can by any means take this place in their road to wherever they may be despatched. My name is Hurley; I hold the office of police magistrate at the neighbouring township of Ghiagong."

"I am sure it is very kind of you, indeed, Mr. Hurley," said Katharine. "You will alight? We cannot set anything better than a mutton chop before you; that is the extent of our larder."

Mr. Hurley's eyes wandered for an instant again to the face of Marianna, who unconsciously withdrew a couple of paces. The temptation seemed too great to resist: "Well," he said, "with such a frank invitation, I suppose I ought to secure your acquaintance whilst I have the opportunity." And, dismounting, he followed his fair conductress in.

Mr. Hurley remained about an hour; the troopers taking the opportunity of unpacking their bush viands, and refreshing themselves at the men's hut. He informed the ladies that there was no existing danger from either bushrangers or the natives,—all was quiet; but he had con-

sidered that for it to be known that the station, lonely as it was, was continually visited by the police would be a great protection in case any marauding parties should hereafter be out. To their great delight, also, they found him fully competent to chat with them about the gay and amusing scenes of London, where he had studied in one of the Inns of Court. Mr. Hurley at length paid his devoirs and rode away, after taking an opportunity, whilst Katharine had gone into the sanctum for a sketch which the cousins had made of the view from the hill, to express his self-gratulations to Marianna at having made her acquaintance.

Mr. Bracton did not reach home till evening, when Willoughby returned with him, having been nearly all day at the township on business.

“ Brother,” said Marianna, shortly after the party had taken their places at the evening meal, “ your visits to the township are growing very suspicious.”

“ How is that ?” asked Willoughby.

“ They become so frequent and so protracted.”

“ Well ! what do you argue from that ?”

“ Only, perhaps, a little further development of your thrifty habits ! Well, if you can make your fortune all at once, brother, we’ll put up with a little peculiarity in the mode ; only you must

make sure that it really is something worth while."

"I really don't know what you mean?" said Willoughby.

"The day you brought us from the township, you looked very hard at the pretty young Jewess at the store door, and turned, if you recollect, after we had passed, to look again."

"My sister, papa," said Katharine, "should add her own confessions to those she is making in behalf of Willoughby. There has been a gentleman here to-day, called Mr. Hurley,—is it not, Marianna? And, if her usual way of quizzing and annoying most those she likes best is any criterion, he is high in her favour already."

It was now Marianna's turn to exhibit a degree of discomposure she had unsuccessfully endeavoured to elicit from her brother.

"But," continued Katharine, "the most amusing part of it was, he seemed perfectly to understand it all on the instant. He assumed to be quite at his ease,—talked with everybody but her,—and the more she quizzed him the more he seemed to enjoy himself; I must say that for keeping his countenance he did credit to his profession: it was really rich. But when he was going, and sister stood sulking yonder, he almost walked over mama and me to her, and said, 'Miss Bracton'

how am I so unhappy as not to have an invitation from you, as well as from Mrs. Bracton and Miss Katharine?"

"I met Mr. Hurley to-day," said Lieutenant Bracton, "and he told me of his call; he seems a very well-educated and gentlemanly young man. I invited him to ride over whenever he found himself at liberty to do so, and he accepted the invitation with some marks of pleasure; which, as you were his principal and most courteous entertainer, must, of course, Miss Katharine, be on your account."

"Oh, no, sir," said Katharine, "you know that, notwithstanding my twelvemonth's seniority, I am doomed to cousin Willoughby: at least so they used to say at home."

"Well, Kate," said Willoughby, "we'll make a fair bargain; if you can suit yourself better, do so, and I'll do the same: but it's to be understood that we are not to forget one another."

Next day brought another visitor to the Rocky Springs; one, however, to whom the place was well enough known already, though not the new inhabitants. This was Morgan Brown, a stockman, having charge of a herd of cattle belonging to a gentleman in Sydney, at a station called Coolarama Creek, about twelve miles further into the interior. It should be here mentioned

that the method of depasturage in New South Wales is by selecting some tract of ground which affords good grass and water, and building upon it (if for horned cattle) a hut and stockyard ; one man is placed as hutkeeper, whose duty it is to be constantly at home, and another, called the stockman, whose duty consists in riding constantly about the run, "heading-off" strange cattle, and tracing and driving in again any of his own that stray away. The method pursued with sheep is only just so far varied as the difference of the animal requires. These stockmen are, almost without exception, unprincipled characters ; for if not such when invested with the office, its unavoidable license and temptations soon effect a change for the worse : they continually meet with cattle in the bush without owners ; some never branded, others which have strayed so far that no one about the part knows whose brand it is they bear. These, of course, there is every temptation to appropriate and sell ; and from selling such chance prizes as these, it is but a step to leaving some of their own master's cattle unbranded, and selling them in due time ; or even fixing a brand of their own upon them, and reserving them till they have gathered a little herd. But, as these stockmen are continually traversing each other's runs, and becoming acquainted

with all the other herds in the vicinity, it is almost inevitable that they should detect each other's malversations; consequently, to secure themselves from mutual betrayal, they act upon a system of complicity,—it is understood among stockmen that nothing need be concealed from each other. The novices, however, are always tried carefully before they are trusted; but, generally, it may be said that wherever cattle-stealing is going on, the whole of the stockmen are hand-and-glove in it. Such was the case at the stations along the Morrumbidgee River, in the vicinity of which Lieutenant Bracton had settled.

Morgan Brown's business now was to find out what sort of a hand the black overseer was likely to turn out. It was known among the stockmen that the late proprietor had some cattle remaining in the mountains, which he had never been able to get in; and the question was, whether Martin Beck knew of them, and, if he did, whether a bargain could be knocked up about them with him.

It was about sundown when Morgan Brown rode up to the hut which Willoughby Bracton contented himself for the present to share with his overseer. Willoughby was up at the large hut at tea, and one of the men was preparing tea for Martin Beck, who was out.

“Have you got any room here?” asked Brown, as he threw himself out of his short stirrups.

Stockmen always ride with short stirrups, partly to save their feet in going over logs, partly for the power it gives of swaying the body to and fro to escape the limbs of trees, and also for ease; as they are often in the saddle twelve hours a day for many days together.

Morgan Brown, however, was not asking a question; he was merely signifying, in the customary way, that he meant to stop there that night; and accordingly, without waiting for any reply, he buckled on his horse's hobbles, took off the saddle and bridle, carried them into the hut, and turned the animal off to graze on the flat below.

“Come,” he said, as he threw himself on one of the berths, “how long do you mean to be getting that tea ready, young fellow? Here, just give us a coal on this pipe.—You're the lad!—Budgery you in your own gunyah. Where's your overseer?—This is his hut is n't it?”

“Yes,” said the man. “He'll be here directly.”

“What sort of a lad is this cove of yours? Is he a sea-lieutenant or a soldier?”

“Sailor,” was the reply.

The stockkeepers affect a rough, bullying way,

which generally obtains for them a sort of unwilling civility from the working hands.

“I say, what sort of a customer is this black? Does he know anything about stock?”

“He’s a very good hand among stock.”

“How many cattle have these people got?”

“Not many yet; but they’ve bought a large herd, and they’re coming on to the run in a few days: the overseer’s repairing the stockyard now for branding.”

“Oh, then he’s a fencer as well?”

“He’s a rattling good hand in anything at all about a farm. He ropes a beast as well as ever I saw a man.”

“Not afraid at all?”

“Not him.”

“Humph!” grunted the inquirer, throwing himself back again on the berth. “If that’s the case,” he proceeded, silently ruminating, “we must have him for a pal; or else we shall have him for an enemy.”

Martin Beck now came in; and the man, who had got ready another pot of tea for the new comer, put the meat and damper on the table, and went away to his own supper. Martin Beck, immediately he caught sight of the fresh saddle, and its owner in self-satisfied possession of one of the berths, stretched at full length smoking his short



pipe, knew that his guest was a stockman, stationed so near as to feel it his right to make himself at home anywhere about the part.

"This is a new hut since I was on this ground last," began the visitor.

"Ay; it's only up a few days. Are you stockkeeping anywhere about here?"

"Coolarama Creek," said Brown. "Your cove got many coming?"

"About three hundred head, I hear," replied Beck.

"Who is to be stockman?"

"I shall look after them myself, for the present," said Beck. "I believe they mean to have a station between here and your place, at that big water-hole in the white-gum flat. When they do that, there must be somebody sent after them."

"A station at the white-gum flat!" shouted Morgan Brown. "There it is again: there'll be stations every half mile, I suppose, directly. Why, there's not enough for the cattle that are on the ground!"—the whole bush was covered with feed. "Well, when my time's up, I'll be off out of this part; there's getting too many stations for me. When I came up here first, my cattle had a run twenty miles every way; then it was ten; and now, here's going to be three hundred head stuck down within six miles of our hut. A man might

as well go stockkeeping in the middle of George Street."

All this perfectly coincided with Martin Beck's own notions and sentiments; though so inappropriate to his present position, that he was cautious of expressing his concurrence.

Morgan Brown, meantime, had worked himself up into a feeling of despair about his future prospects in the cattle-stealing line, which made him almost careless about securing Martin's complicity. Martin consequently became the inquisitor in turn; for, as will be hereafter seen, he was deeply implicated in this dishonest practice, and even had been addicted to it for years. Intending to remain in this retired part of the country for some time, he felt as desirous of coming to an understanding with Morgan, as Morgan till now with him.

"Are there any 'Rooshans' in the mountains?" he inquired, in that quiet, deliberate way which we have already observed him using, when he overcame his stammer for a particular purpose. His purpose on this occasion was, by an easy, even tone, to throw the stockman off his guard; but he was not aware what questions had been put and solved about himself before he came in.

The light dawned instantly on Morgan Brown, who replied, "I believe you, my lad; and some

rum 'uns. I know of four or five young cattle now, that never felt the heat of a brand yet."

"And no down?" rapidly inquired Beck, his voice falling again into its natural tone and stammer, as Morgan's unexpected confidence threw him in turn off his guard.

"Not a bit of a down," responded the stock man, emphatically.

"That's the go!" said Beck: "they're doing nobody any good where they are."

The understanding was perfect. It would but weary and unnecessarily offend the reader to listen any further to the conversation of two such men. They sat down to their meal, meantime, as if an acquaintance of half a century already subsisted between them. And Martin, mindful that he might need the same hospitalities himself hereafter at Morgan's hut, as his berth and bed were not wide enough for two, supplied his accomplice with all but his last blanket; which, with the stockman's own opossum cloak, made a comfortable shakedown, on a sheet of dry bark before the fire; the saddle being, as usual, the pillow.

The arrival of the herd of cattle purchased by Lieutenant Bracton, and of the dray with its load from Sydney, were the only incidents that occurred for some weeks. Mr. Hurley, however, instead of sending the police round by the Rocky

Springs, adopted Lieutenant Bracton's suggestion, and came himself. Not rare were his visits, nor hasty his departures; but we do not find that his company was ever considered unwelcome or ill-timed; although more than once, before the addition to the household of their female servant, he surprised his two fair acquaintances whilst deeply involved in the several duties of *Suds Prima* and *Secunda*.

## CHAPTER VI.

The Township of Ghiagong.—The Jew Storekeeper.—The young Jewess.—Rachael at home.

THE ladies had hoped that on the arrival of the dray from Sydney they should find all their wants and wishes supplied; but it turned out, as it always does, that a number of important and (they thought) indispensable minutiae had been neglected in the selection.

It became necessary, therefore, to have recourse to the Store at the township, and Marianna was fixed upon as plenipotentiary for the domestic part of the purchases, Willoughby accompanying her to select some needful farm implements, &c. Once more the gay-hearted girl sprang lightly into the little green cart, not a little enjoying the prospect of effecting a satisfactory detection of the partiality she had persuaded herself her brother entertained for the pretty Hebrew, and indicating as much by silent tokens to her cousin.

It was a delightful morning; the serenity that a retired life amidst the stillness of solemn forests and lofty hills, and tracts of level plain and lucid waters, brings home into the hearts of almost all, had not failed to influence Marianna's nature: one of the most sensitive to outward impressions. As they rode cheerily along the sunny greensward, and beneath the shadows of the trees, her lips forgot their customary prattle, and, like two rosy infants wiled from their merry struggles, pillowed themselves against each other in repose.

The township of Ghiagong (for it becomes more proper now than hitherto to retain the native names) occupies a spot on the left bank of the Morrumbidgee, at about ten or twelve miles distant from the Rocky Springs—the horseman estimates it at ten, the pedestrian at twelve, and as yet no authoritative decision of the controversy has been made by the verdict of a surveyor. Suddenly the tract of light, open gum trees—the advanced guard of the forest veterans—is passed, and a plain covered with fine grass, and swept on three sides by the river, opens to the traveller. The little clear area is a natural plain; only an odd tree here and there, and far apart, has ever appeared upon it; and those have long ago fallen beneath the axe of the hutkeeper, for firewood. The Morrumbidgee is here in the early part of its

career, and has not yet received the waters of the hundred giant valleys which eventually drain down to the immense flat country through which it makes its way to the Murray; up to this point the stream is chiefly the product of a comparatively small tract of mountain country, and of the flats in immediate propinquity below. Hence its reaches and bends, not struck out boldly by the force of a voluminous stream, are on a scale of much inferior magnitude to that which mark them further down. At Ghiagong, the river meets the corner of elevated ground that has been fixed on for a township, and, diverted from a straight course, wanders round its base, leaving high and precipitous banks on that side, till it finds ground low enough for its onward progress on the other.

This open and slightly elevated tract of land is of too irregular a shape to be accurately described by terms; but it measures about three-quarters of a mile in length, by half a mile in breadth; its narrowest part being from the river to the bush behind, its greatest length running from end to end of the curve. The settlement had been made at that extremity of the little plain where the river, first checked, begins to wind round it.

Few things momentarily perplex the association of ideas in the mind of a newly-arrived inhabitant of old countries, more than the first sight of an

Australian township in its very earliest days : where he expects to find streets and a throng of men, he often meets with no more than half a dozen buildings of the most various description, scattered without order and far apart ; whilst, at times, he may watch the spot for an hour without seeing half a dozen persons. When the visitors from the Rocky Springs approached Ghiagong on the morning in question, such was the case. As they emerged from the bush, on the left of them lay extended the yet unoccupied plain ; on the right, the few buildings dignified by the title of the township. Nearest, and with its back line toward them, there was the Store, a common erection of slabs, with no more than a ground story, bark roofed, and between forty and fifty feet long by twenty deep. Opposite, nearly a quarter of a mile distant, and facing them, stood the Court House, with a dwelling attached for the resident magistrate, and a lock-up in the rear ; its solid stone material and rigid architecture readily suggesting the uses to which it was devoted. To the right of the store, at about the same distance, and thus forming a triangle with the Court House, was the little public-house, lately established, whilst over the intermediate space were scattered five or six huts, from the little plastered and whitewashed cottage of two rooms, down to the bark tent jus



large enough to cover a bed for a pair of fencers.

The proprietor of the store, Lazarus Moses, commonly called Lazarus, was very aged, but by no means deserved the description accorded him by the refined taste of Mrs. Smart; on the contrary, he was a remarkably fine specimen of the green old age of an Israelite. His eyes, after nearly eighty years' active use, were still clear and brilliant, and his intellect performed all its functions with unimpaired accuracy. Only at times, of late, his daughter, who could compare the present with the past, thought or feared, that she sometimes detected a failure of outward objects to reach the inner faculties with their accustomed force, and an indecisiveness of judgment and a hesitation of will that had not always characterized her father; but so slightly that she readily trusted, and cheerfully hoped, that the notion had no other ground than in the apprehensiveness of her own affection.

As they drove round the end of the store, the first thing they saw was one of those strong, well-boned bays so prevalent among stock horses, standing in the warm sunlight, saddled, and having his bridle hung on the hook at the doorpost. Over the saddle were slung a pair of two-gallon stone bottles, and which, when the horse-

man was mounted, would fall somewhere about under the bend of his leg. Alighting and passing into the store, they found Mr. Moses busy with a purchaser. It was Morgan Brown, the stockman stationed at Coolarama Creek.

The Jew received his new customers with all that eagerness and those propitiating courtesies which characterize the business transactions of his race; abandoning, for a time, the stockman, who was inspecting some articles of apparel, to secure the orders of Mr. Bracton and his sister.

“Rashael—Ho! Rashael! Rashael! Von of de yong lady vat is come to Diandullah Mountain. Vot can I find for you, my goot sir? Everything here vat can be vant at a new farm:—boot, baragan-fustian, slops for your men, pocket-knife;—best teas at half a crown, goot sugar twopence; rum, gin, prandy, all as good as from de bonded store. Ugh!” (he concluded, as the recollection of the queen’s inexorable rates, admitting of no abatement, passed through his mind) “I buy *very* dear, and sell *very* sheap!”

Rachael had made her appearance; but in the surpassing loveliness of the young female who now stood before her, Marianna Bracton, though well used to the loveliness of her sex decked in their richest attire, utterly forgot to turn her intended gaze upon her brother and scrutinize his

thoughts. It was no longer the pretty young Jewess she had heard of, and glanced at as they drove by, but a being on whose outward presence she saw womanhood so gloriously emblazoned, that her heart yearned to embrace her, and call her "sister." The Hebrew girl blushed deeply, and Marianna instinctively turned to give her brother a mute reproof: but his face was unflushed; his brows were firm; his eye was only bright with intellectual admiration: she felt that it was the glow of her own bosom that must have awakened those throbbings in the bosom of the young Jewess, and tinted her cheek so deeply.

"Vell, vell," broke in the sound of the old man's voice, as the stockman rode away from the door, "I gif you as mosh as any von for the shkins, bot I vill not puy any prand. Shkins is very goot property; but the prand—no, no." It is necessary to explain that an unbranded skin may be purchased without its endangering the establishment of guilty cognisance by the purchaser; but in the purchase of a branded skin, he is expected to satisfy himself that the brand is that of the vendor; or that the vendor is authorized by the owner.

"Vell, my goot sir," continued he, turning to Willoughby; "Vot goots to-day? Some first-rate vaistcoats for your men—best silk plush—only four dollars—saltbox pocket. There, I

shall put you up von dozen at three dollars. No? Vell! I haf not take as mosh ready monish this veek as pay vat the interesht of my monish come to."

That such a statement by an old trader may not discourage others in their adventures, a little comment is necessary. The currency of the interior very rarely takes the form of *ready money*; it is chiefly in drafts, &c. on houses in Sydney, which the parties holding present on making their purchase at these stores; and thus, instead of paying in ready money at them, customers expect to receive their balance in small change. The dealers then send or carry the paper money they collect, when it amounts to a considerable sum, to Sydney, and *there* turn it into cash.

"Come, my goot, sir; look about. I vill take your father's order for von tousand pound," said the old man.

"Nails, Mr. Moses, are the main thing I want; some three inch spikes, some batten nails, and some shingle nails."

The storekeeper proceeded to call his occasional porter, who divided his services between the township-store and the public-house, to get out some bags of the articles required.

Willoughby took the opportunity, as invited, to

inspect the stock. He seemed to be in a sort of Noah's-ark in the goods line. At the further end stood ranged a row of casks and puncheons, containing spirits and wines; along the back were various ample tiers of shelves, here displaying piles of cotton prints and calicos; there were ranged tin-ware and ironmongery of all sorts, from the tin-quart to the three-legged iron pot; in one place there were stocks of boots and shoes, male and female, in another groceries of all sorts from spices to cheese; muslin and lace and ribbon boxes, and rolls of the best cloth were piled not far from bundles of canvass and the coarsest wool baggings; while hoe and axe heads, saws of all sorts and sizes, and all that "too-numerous-to-mention" order of goods, were stowed away in odd corners. A long shilleen or low building, annexed, under a sloping roof, to the main store, opened into it by small doors in the back; and in it were ranged all the heavier goods, such as bags of nails, sugar in the mat, &c. &c. And on the outside might be heard by day the frequent rattle of the chain of a fierce and large watchdog, as he contended against the flies; and his bay by night.

The young man's survey of the merchandize was several times intermitted to draw near to where his sister and the Jewess were busily engaged in their traffic. But he drew near only to gaze and listen,

and urge himself away again with a sort of smile of wonder; he had no thought of such a thing as to fall in love with a Jewess.

Mr. Moses at length returned, bringing with him the man he had been in search of. The selection of the nails along with other things occupied a considerable time; and when everything was ready for stowing away in the cart, a sharp rain was found to have commenced. On turning to look for his sister, Willoughby observed her smiling at him from the opposite side of the pembroke table that stood in the apartment from which Rachael had come, at her father's summons, on their arrival. It was merely a portion of the main building divided off by a line of slabs; but it was ceiled with bark, leaving a loft above; and the slabs were plastered and whitewashed. It was also handsomely furnished; for none are more given than are the Jews to surround themselves within doors with the little elegances of life:—always a token, when nationally customary, of refined feeling. Rather more than half of the area thus walled off from the store was furnished as a sitting-room; the other portion being again divided into two small sleeping apartments.

As Marianna caught her brother's eye, she lifted her finger, and, with something that looked very much like exultation, pointed it toward the

small glass window, against which the rain was beating fast and audibly. He also saw that her bonnet and gloves were off, and that the decanters and a plate of very tempting cake had been placed upon the table. Rachael, also, who appeared to be partly enjoying Marianna's delight, and partly thinking seriously about the inconvenience the rain would be likely to cause her, rose the instant she saw that Willoughby had completed his loading, and inviting him to the chair she left, placed another for herself by Marianna. But before seating herself, Rachael stepped forward again, and placing the cake and wine before him said, with a scarcely perceptible failure of good accent and phraseology, as she turned to Marianna—"I will make *you* help yourself, and then you will come again. It seems to me as if I had known you a great many years," she added smiling, but yet with an expression of voice and feature in which lurked something of sadness.

"It seems to me, Rachael, as if I had known you a great many years," replied Marianna; and, touched by the plaintive tones of the voice, she turned and placed her hand on the Jewess's arm. "Well, I must prove your friendship," she continued mirthfully, after an instant's pause. "You have invited me to stay with you till to-morrow, if

it continues raining; and although I said No, I assure you I meant Yes."

"I am so glad to hear you say so!" exclaimed the Jewess; "I often wish that my father would live where we could see our people. Our life here is like that of a bird in the wilderness. To see them," she added, in the same tone that had before attracted Marianna's attention, "would be something."

Marianna again looked inquiringly into her face; but Rachael appeared unconscious of the effect of her last remark, and entered into no explanation of it.

The rain beat down more vehemently as the day advanced. A tarpaulin had been thrown over the purchases in the cart, as a temporary protection; and some empty bags, according to custom, had been lent to the poor dumb helper of man's labours, for a great-coat. But the bush must have become so swampy, and the difficulty of keeping the right direction, where the tracks were faint, so increased by the impossibility of discerning the mountain through the rain and haze, that Willoughby readily yielded to the old storekeeper's persuasions to remove the goods again into the store, and ride home in the saddle. He saw that he need not commend his sister to the care of her young hostess; and the wealth of Lazarus was



notoriously such as to render the obligation one of no moment to him as a matter of cost. The old man, moreover, seemed to kindle into a new vivacity at the mention of the arrangement by his daughter; and none the less when he saw the young Gentile lady leaning on the arm of his beloved child, as they came into the store together to look out at the weather. Instead of feeling any hesitation about leaving Marianna in the Jew's dwelling, Willoughby felt—what all feel who observe the Jews in their own families—how strangely vulgar estimation libels the Hebrew race.

“Poor fellow, what a wretched journey he will have!” exclaimed Marianna, as Willoughby at last dashed off across the half-deluged plain: “and it is almost dark, too.”

“I have heard say,” said Rachael, “that men have a joy in strife of every kind; that it is their nature to struggle with the elements, to subjugate wild lands, to hunt the fierce beasts of the desert, and—but oh, what a delusion and a vanity that must be!—to destroy one another, for the mere gratification of their passions.”

No more customers came to the store that night. The doors were soon closed and barred, and the evening meal was placed upon the board: the kettle of the little Hebrew family sang much as

Christian people's kettles are wont to sing. Marianna saw, with mingled emotions of awe, and love, and joy, that after the meal was partaken of, both the silver-haired ancient and the black-tressed maiden were silent for a time, with heads bowed down, as those who give thanks for the bounties of the Creator.

The operations connected with the removal of the equipage of the tea-table, and its restitution to a state of fitness for fresh service, presented an opportunity for Miss Bracton to show how adept she had already become in the performance of the duties demanded of her by her new style of life. Still, Rachael had more than once to suppress a smile or blush at some amusing inadequacy, or droll mistake, of her visitor. Before their task was completed, the old man arose, and Rachael hastened to receive her father's evening blessing and caress; and when Marianna advanced and extended her hand and bade him good-night, the venerable Israelite stretched forth the other and laid it upon her head, and blessed her in the name of the God of his fathers. The world was shut out; thoughts of thankfulness had multiplied in his heart as he listened to the pelting of the vehement rain without, and watched the comfortable security of his child within. He had listened to the joyous utterances of the two young hearts to each other, and

nis soul melted toward the stranger, who had made Rachael happy beyond her wont.

When the young girls sat down and chatted by themselves, all housekeeping duties at an end, it was sometimes of joyful things, and sometimes, again, of sorrowful. At length their words were of themselves, and of their own thoughts, and hopes, and aversions, and loves; each speaking of the faith of her own heart, more that the other might say that she had the same faith, than in the spirit of evil days, when emulation has led the heart away from its innocence, and sullied the truth and destroyed the kindliness of the spirit.

“Hush!” said Rachael, suddenly; and they both listened for some moments: “I thought I heard a strange noise from my father’s room. It must have been the moan of the dog in the rain,” she continued, when at length it was not repeated. “I am so afraid sometimes that my father will die; then I shall be quite alone on the earth.”

“Not alone, darling Rachael,” said Marianna, tenderly, as she drew the head of the young girl down on to her bosom. “How kind you have been to me: can I ever forget you?”

“We know not,” said the Jewess: “our hearts are a shifting sand. When my mother was first taken away, I thought I should never forget her, and my father was as one from whose eyes the

light is withdrawn ; but now I sometimes think we should hardly go out to bid her come in, if she were standing at the door."

"Oh, think not so ; think not so," said Marianna ; "that is but the wandering of the thoughts : the heart is still the same ; for to love is to lose oneself in the consciousness of that lovelier presence that smiles upon us. We may forget the smiles till we can reach the presence again ; but then, believe me, darling, all the love will come back again, fond and full as ever. Are there none among your own people, among the living of your nation, whom you love, excepting your father only ?"

"None," said Rachael, "whom I love ; though my heart still longs to gaze upon them. Perhaps I ought to be ashamed of the weakness, for I am to them as the flesh of that beast ; and what is worse still, they persecute my father for my sake. My mother, Miss Bracton," she continued, "read your Scriptures, and she bade me read them ; and I have read them, and will ever read them. Oh, what a man was your prophet ! And yet, is it not a marvel that the Jews should be wrong ?—the martyrs of the law and the testimony—the heroes of this world-long struggle against the supremacy of the evil—the keepers of the spark given forth from the impregnable glory !"

“That we are right,” said Marianna, “we know by history and by our institutions. Inquire no more, dear Rachel: read on. But let us talk of something else, for you have become too sad.”

The little Dutch clock in the store at length rang off eleven; a long excess over the hour for repose in the bush. The two young girls hastened to their couch, and slumbered in their beauty—types, this of the bright and spirit-moving times of the past and present and future of Christendom—that of the sad and gorgeous era of the ancient world.

## CHAPTER VII.

Coolarama Creek Station.—The Stock-yard.—A “Shiveau” at the Hut.—“Whacking the Blunt.”—Beck’s History.

At a much earlier hour than he would have chosen himself, Willoughby Bracton proceeded to the township for Marianna; urged by his father’s opinion that it would have been better to have housed with his sister for the night at the little inn, and sent home a messenger, instead of leaving her among persons of unknown character. As he was returning with Marianna, just as they drew near that point of the mountain at which the road turned round it up the bank of the creek to the ground overlooked by the huts, and reached the edge of the forest, they saw Martin Beck pursuing his way at a sharp canter down the flat on the opposite side of the creek. The little stream, as already observed, pursued its way from thence to the river; and the overseer’s course was one that, if followed out, would lead

him to the Morrumbidgee, a few miles below that confluence.

“ I wonder what he can be riding so hard for in that direction ? ” said Willoughby, rather speaking to himself than addressing his sister. “ The cattle were all up the creek a couple of miles this morning, when I fetched in this horse ; I suppose there must be some odd ones strayed off.”

“ He is a most singular man,” replied Marianna ; “ he ’s away half the day sometimes, and nobody can find him ; and then, at night, he ’ll make a fire of the chips, or the old rails and posts he ’s taking down at the stockyard, and keep on working till eleven or twelve o ’clock. Does he have a ‘ feed,’ as they call it, when he comes in ? ”

“ Oh, of course ! ” replied Willoughby.

“ And do you join him ? ” inquired Miss Bracton, laughing.

“ Well, sometimes. It ’s impossible, you know, to be waked out of a good sleep at that hour, and hear the fryingpan crackling and hissing, and see the hut as light as at noonday with the blaze, and lie still.”

“ I should tell him not to wake me in that way, if I were you.”

“ Oh, I have ; but it ’s of no use. He takes as

much notice of me as he would of you ;—laughs, and says he's overseer."

"In that hateful way of his: that laugh, brother, does not come from his heart. There's a depth of deceit about that man."

"Ah! you're such a judge of character," responded her brother. "You said the same about my old friend, Charley Duncan."

"Well?"

"Well, and you see, though you thought so ill of him, your inseparable Miss Poynton snapped him up; and I'm sure she's shrewd enough."

"I've heard all about it, brother, before we sailed," said Marianna, significantly. "If *your* friend had nothing to tell you, *our* friend told us something."

"What was it? Did Charley smoke too many cigars; or did he want to go a long whaling voyage again, and she would n't let him?"

The arrival of the travellers at the door of the little homestead was suffered to prevent the revelation of Mr. Duncan's precise offence.

The overseer, meantime, kept a steady canter down the flat for about five miles; there the flat terminated in a point, formed by the gradual approximation of the mountain range and the river.



Well worn cattle tracks or paths here ran along the river side, higher and lower down the round end of the range. There might be five or six of them, like narrow terraces one above another; and the length of the shelving ground was about a quarter of a mile. At its termination they turned round, and followed the other side of the mountain up a gully, narrow at the entrance, but in some parts more extended as it proceeded. Down this gully—sometimes keeping the midway and leaving equal flats on each sides; but sometimes diverging to the sides, and thus presenting all the low ground on one side and the abrupt rise of the hills on the other—ran the water-course already mentioned as Coolarama Creek. The station where Morgan Brown was stockkeeping was reached after running the creek up about seven miles, and was the first and only station on it. The water-course itself commenced some four or five miles still higher; but no other station was to be met with. The timber generally was of a much heavier character than that met with in the open forest, and gave to the gully, where it happened to be narrow and the hills steep and high, a gloom and a chillness which rendered the travelling far from

cheerful. Beck had often to walk his horse, for the tracks sometimes ran up over steep stony points that jutted out into the low ground, whilst in others they followed the flat, passing over fallen trees or crossing the creek itself, where the cattle found such to be their most direct course to and fro. Heavy floods sometimes swept down the bed of the creek, and even extended over the flats; but in general it presented merely a chain of water-holes or ponds, with tracts of the dry bed betwixt. These, however, were in several places deep and large. Such was the condition of the creek at the present time. About half a mile before reaching the station, the creek turned at a very sharp angle, almost retracing its way in the direction it had come; and as the range here was neither very high nor very steep, nearly a mile was saved by riding over its elbow to the hut, instead of following round the course of the water.

It was thus nearly noon before Beck reached the top of the ridge where it looked down on the hut; a bark erection of only a single apartment, such as two or three persons could move about in without being in each other's way. It had apparently been built some years, and not very care-

fully, for the bark, both of the sides and roof, was ragged looking, weather marked, and warped ; a more than ordinary volume of smoke issued from it, sailing away almost in a straight line on the wind, through the cold, dull atmosphere of the day.

At the further end, or rather lying off from the corner, and extending frontward was the stock-yard. It may be needful here to state, that these stockyards are enclosures varying in extent and height according to the numbers and strength of the cattle : sometimes there is merely the single yard ; but where all the operations connected with very large herds are to be provided for, a very considerable area is enclosed, which is again subdivided into compartments, communicating with each other. Very wild herds, or such as contain very powerful animals, require great height and strength of fence ; but in general a fence of five good rails, each about eight or ten inches wide by two or three thick, with posts about every nine feet apart, and let into the ground from two and a half feet to three, affords sufficient resistance to the rush of a herd. The height of such a fence is about five feet six inches, and is sufficient to prevent the common cattle from leaping out. “ Russians,” however, as they are called, will often go

over at a bound; and with lowered head and erected tail, and darting at everything in the shape of man or beast that they encounter, make good their retreat into the mountains. Where such cattle are to be dealt with, a six-rail fence with a round top rail over all is sometimes necessary, and all the timber of strength proportionably greater. The ingress and egress of the herd is betwixt two massive posts, a foot or eighteen inches in diameter, placed at about ten or twelve feet asunder, and furnished with strong, round, or flat rails, that can be slipped in and out as required. The force of a heavy herd rushing out is, notwithstanding, such as often to carry away the posts.

The stockyard at Coolarama Creek was one of the smaller class—merely a single enclosure—with a much less one attached, as a pen for calves. Its timber was so gray and old as to bespeak an antiquity of some years; and in sundry places decayed rails had been replaced by round saplings, rough out of the adjacent bush. The slip-rails were up, and a solitary heifer of about three years old was walking impatiently about the yard, followed hither and thither by her calf, with wild bounds, and every symptom of terror and excite-

ment. It is only the possession of a second calf which elevates the beast into the rank of *cow*, in the strict phraseology of the stockyard.) Morgan Brown, it appeared, did not bring his herd home very often, for the marsh-mallows were growing in bunches as large as the common bramble-bush on the outside of the fence in several places, and the interior of the yard, though bare, was but little trodden; whereas in yards much used there is usually a flooring of dust some inches in depth. Altogether, the whole station, hut, yard, and vicinity, had a solitary and desolate aspect.

But very different in character were the sounds that greeted Beck's ear as his horse stepped obliquely down the side of the range, carefully as good stock-horses who traverse much mountain learn to do, yet, nevertheless, every few paces, slipping sideways down on the loose stones without losing his feet. A voice, of that mixed accent which distinguishes the offspring of Dublin parents of the lowest class born in one of our great English cities, was singing, with the richest licence of droll intonation, a composition, of which we retain only the concluding verses, but which might be not inaptly entitled "The Family Man":—a phrase signifying, in the "flash" dialect, "a

thief" or "cross-man." The fragment will at once illustrate their sentiments, and identify the melodist himself with that portion of the population whose right of passage to the colony is presented to them with so many grave public ceremonies at the various Old and New Bailies.

### THE FAMILY MAN.

There's never a chap—Bob, Arthur, or Dan—  
Lives half such a life as "a countryman;"\*  
He scours the city, he sweeps the road;  
Asses laden too heavy he helps to unload;  
He spends all he gets, and he gets all he can,  
Does the ratlin', roarin' Family Man.

There's never a chap—Bob, Arthur, or Dan—  
Half such a chap as a countryman;  
If you've little or none you may share in his mess,  
If you've got too much he'll help you to less;  
He gets all he spends, and that's all he can,  
Does the rattlin', roarin' Family Man.

To these lyric stanzas, a rolling chorus was supplied by six or seven voices repeating the first couplet of each at its conclusion: a short interlude being supplied in the same manner after the chorus by deafening shouts—"Good song, Dubbo!"—"Here whet thee whistle lad!"—"I'll back Mikkey for a strave against all Morrumbidgee."

\* We apprehend this term must be of similar signification with the other.

“Silence,” — “Attention,” — “The song, gentlemen.” “Bob! shut up:—go on, Dubbo.”

These scenes and sounds, which may be supposed to be novel to the reader, were to Martin Beck habitual and familiar in the daily experience of many years. As he got off his horse at the end of the hut the animal gave a snort, and turned his head up the creek; when, looking round, Martin saw two other horses grazing at a little distance, one naked, the other hobbled and saddled, and having the bridle tied short to one of the stirrups, so as to allow of his feeding without entangling himself. Passing his own bridle round his horse's neck and fastening it, he turned it off unhobbled (as it never wandered far) to join the others.

The door of the hut had been shut against the sharp and blustering wind that was blowing, and on Martin opening it the din of voices ceased instantly. There being no window, and the dusky interior having become impervious to vision from the dense volume of tobacco-smoke, it was not at first apparent of what materials the assemblage was composed. As the smoke cleared with the wind it could be discerned that a whole group, of different ages, aspects, and garments, was gathered together; but almost every one had the stock-

whip either in his hand, or hung round his neck, or near him on the ground. On Beck's entrance, two or three jumped up from the little round blocks, or the berths on which they were sitting, as if surprised.

"Only our pal from the Rocky Springs," said Morgan Brown, very composedly, and with a touch of drollery, as if enjoying the apprehensions of some of his companions.

"Oh! I beg the gentleman's pardon," said the singer, "I didn't see his face; it's so dark." A general laugh attested the hit.

"I thought it was some swell cove," said another.

"Here young fellow, drink," said a fourth.

"What do you call this?" said Martin, in his regulated tone—"tea?"

"Tea!" said Dubbo; "who drinks tea out of the little end of a pint-pot? No, lad, it's a drop of as good rum as your cove's got in his stores; though he is an old sea-dog."

"I'll taste," said Martin, relaxing into something more of good-fellowship than he usually did, in his laugh. "But I never drank two glasses in one day in my life yet."

"He never does drink, lads," interposed Mor-



gan Brown, who saw that the Black's refusal was producing offence and mistrust of him. “But he has always got a good glass to give the likes of us at his own hut.”

This explanation and certificate restored the general community of sentiment; and, after Martin had drank part of the allowance served out to him, the panikin was replenished for the company *seriatim*.

More serious business now came forward. The several head of cattle about which Morgan and Beck had held communication had been got in and disposed of; the various individuals present giving various sorts of assistance. Some had helped to get them into Morgan's yard, or drive them to where the purchaser required them delivered; another had found the purchaser; and so on throughout. The proceeds amounted to upwards of ten pounds, which was now divided. But nothing explicit was said about the source from which the money came; as Rowley the hut-keeper could not be sent away from the carouse without incurring the imputation of treating him unhandsomely; whilst he was not yet among the fully initiated. After the settlement was effected, by the interchange of small orders and by various

acts of barter, and with very little ready cash, the conversation proceeded more freely.

“ So you ’re going to give Morgan your share for that heifer and her calf ? ” inquired one of the party of Beck.

“ She ’s well worth it,” said the overseer ; “ I know her breed.”

“ You had better put her somewhere out of sight,” remarked another.

“ Now then, guy ! ” retorted Brown, pointing to the hutkeeper, but unobserved by him. “ I ’ve had her ever since she was five months old. She ’s my own.”

“ Ha ! ” exclaimed the individual, who was trying to “ chaff ” Morgan ; “ she ’s yours till the right owner comes for her. But I don’t blame you. I wish I could get the same price for half a dozen.”

“ Oh ! ” replied Martin, “ she ’s worth the money. But if it is a little too much, what’s the odds. If anybody ought to have a chance, it’s a prisoner.”

“ You say right, lad. You’re a native, I hear ? ”

“ Of the Derwent,” added Beck.

“ Well, that’s all one. If ever I can serve you, you know where to come. I like to hear a man

“speak that way about a prisoner : it shows he knows himself.”

The sentiment was reiterated by all who heard it proclaimed : to secure which verdict of universal feeling in his favour, was Martin’s object in expressing himself as he had done.

Shortly afterwards, at Beck’s proposal, several of the party proceeded out to the yard to help him to brand the heifer and calf. The brand was already at the hut ; it was a new one, ordered of the blacksmith at the township by Beck, and brought home by Morgan, when he visited the stores of Lazarus Moses for the rum now in course of consumption. The operation occupied but a few minutes. As we shall have to speak of a branding-day on a larger scale hereafter, in connexion with still more important incidents, the process may here be passed by without further remark. As soon as the branding was completed, the beasts were turned out of the yard, and, maddened with the terror and pain, rushed furiously away over the hills. It was a point well understood by custom, that Morgan would find them again for the new owner whenever he might require them ; and their habituation to Morgan’s run was ample security for

their remaining there. Martin caught his horse and rode homeward ; the other stockmen returned to the hut to finish the rum (the liquor of course being at the general expense) and to play off the balances of their accounts at the scarcely ever-varied game—all-fours.

Martin Beck rode up over the hill again, and down into the creek, and homeward. “ It’s all to the good yet,” he muttered ; “ only for those precious women with their black looks. Perhaps it’s only my fancy. Come, Doctor, be alive (and in went the spurs) ; it’s hungry time o’ day.”

At the time that Martin Beck first applied to Lieutenant Bracton, he was just arrived in Sydney from the Coal River, not from the Derwent as he stated. Nor was he a native of the Derwent, but of the elder colony ; his birthplace being not many miles from Sydney, on one of the rivers near to Port Jackson. But he had for some years been absent from the vicinity of Sydney, partly at the Five Islands and partly to the north, in the Coal River districts. The latter portion of the time he had spent near the Coal River, which is the name prevalent in the colony for the lower part of the Hunter. There he had been employed in the cedar grounds, taking con-

tracts for plank; and, as he was a first-rate workman in the bush, executing large parts of them himself. But along with his mechanical work in the bush, he had also pursued the system of cattle-stealing, till he had possessed himself of several hundred head.

At length, in the district where he had been carrying on his course of plunder on every herd within convenient distance, what is called in the colony a "cattle racket," took place. These cattle-rackets can be explained to the English reader only by stating that their origin is generally the discovery of some wholesale aggression on horned cattle by one, or a knot of several; and as an immediate consequence a universal suspicion of all parties who seem to have acquired large herds, or the reputation of possessing large herds, in a short period. Martin Beck, working and living chiefly in the brushes or very thickest forest, covered also with underwood, in pursuit of his occupation, had been aware of the most solitary and rugged places for hiding his stolen cattle; and by so hiding them secured himself from all beyond the mere suspicion of possessing them. But it was customary for parties brought before

the magistrates on the charge of cattle-stealing, to endeavour to secure the position of queen's evidence, by giving information against others; even though they possessed no available knowledge of their guilt. Now Beck from his childhood had been betrayed, by his insulated and depressed position as a black, into a perpetual habit of endeavouring to attract regard and attention. He felt the natural strength of his character, and was discontented with his social rank. Hence, several years previously to any danger accruing, he had been in the habit of boasting, among his mates in the bush, of the possession of a good herd, until it was become a standing thing among them to give him credit for having (somewhere or other) a large stock; and the very circumstance that it was "somewhere or other," involved the assurance that they had been obtained unfairly. Therefore, when a cattle-racket broke out at the head police-section of the Coal River district, and some of those whom Beck was most intimate with came to be in custody, he decamped, under the apprehension that he might be informed against. The cattle were tolerably safe in the gullies between the Australian Agricultural Company's

land and the mass of mountains behind, but chiefly in the brushes and ravines of William's River; and if found and owned could only be lost to him. Meantime, his business was to take care that he himself was not found and owned, To prevent such a catastrophe, he proceeded to Sydney, determined to seize the first opportunity that offered to get to some distant part of the territory, where he would not be known; and in a few days he succeeded in getting into the position he now held at the Rocky Springs.

It will not detract from either the amusement or the knowledge this account is intended to afford, to state that the character of Martin Beck is not a fictitious one; but one which the writer had long and ample opportunities of studying. Beck was a man whose abilities compelled homage: but the contempt of society had repelled him—insulated him; first made him selfish, and then rendered him cunning. And that cunning, isolation, and selfishness, is at this period a complete definition of his character. He was no drunkard, no petty thief, no libertine; on the contrary, he delighted in labour, in economy, and—but for the vice that was so singularly swallowing up his whole nature—in manliness. But man

was his enemy. Then what faith had he to keep? None, except to himself. How was he to keep that? He thought, by getting power. What was power, as he had had the opportunity of discerning? Wealth.



## CHAPTER VIII.

“ The Musquito Fleet.” — The “ Little Bee.” — Trip to Broken Bay.—Brisbane Water.—Reuben Kable’s Farm.—The “ Daisy of the Bay.”—Mary Kable at Home.—A Forsaken Farm.—A Tête-a-tête.—The Old Nurse.

A FEW days after the events of the last chapter, Willoughby Bracton proceeded again to Sydney. The object of his journey was to conclude the arrangement for two flocks of sheep, which had been inspected by Lieutenant Bracton at an out-station of one of the large stock proprietors in the Morrumbidgee district ; the owner himself being resident in the capital.

On Willoughby’s arrival in town, the owner being absent at one of his farms in another part of the country, it was necessary to await his return. In the mean time, it occurred to the young emigrant that the knowledge and judgment of his friend Reuben Kable might be most judiciously taken advantage of as a final direction ; and, being as yet without any personal friends in the capital, the prospect of the trip to Broken Bay was too tempting to be resisted.

On making inquiry as to the best method of proceeding thither, he found that he could travel either by land or water. The journey landwise involved a long and troublesome detour, if made on horseback; and transit by vehicles to the vicinity he had to reach, there was none; nor probably will there exist any for many years to come; so rugged, broken, and mountainous is the whole country around the spot, both behind and on either side. On the other hand, numbers of little one and two masted craft and other vessels trade to Sydney and back from the various lesser bays into which the parent bay diverges; carrying colonial produce to the capital, and bringing back the merchants' importations from Britain and from foreign countries generally, to the fireside of the solitary bushman on the margins of these arms of the sea. So numerous, indeed, are these little coasting vessels to Broken Bay and other places lying northward, and to the various settlements rising up to the southward of Sydney, as to have obtained for them, among sea-going people in the harbour, the popular title of the Mosquito Fleet; for, when strong easterly gales have brought all into Port Jackson and pre-

vented any getting out, on the setting-in of a fair wind they all set sail together.

It was one of these small craft, the *Little Bee*, of Brisbane Water, that Willoughby, as he walked along the broad level of the Market Wharf cut in the living rock, and overlooked from the crag above by all the various and irregular buildings of the back of the town, selected for getting a passage in. She was one of the smallest class of decked schooners, built for running up the salt-water creeks as far as they can be navigated by a vessel fit to go to sea: she was the pride of the trade as a sea-boat, though, with a full lading aboard, very little of her hull was out of water. Most of these small craft are good sea-boats; and so they had need be. The climate is liable to sudden and violent changes of wind, and the class of men navigating the small coasters are but too apt to give way on shore to intoxication; whilst, again, they never go on board till the last minute, and the whole duration of the few hours' voyage, which is along a rocky and dangerous coast, is not more than sufficient to restore their sobriety. The crews of these small coasting traders may be very correctly described as the moral refuse of the regular marine class,

but possessing a plentiful ingredient of first-rate seamanship. Hence it often happens that the owner puts in command a steady man, little more than a mere landsman; depending upon him for the security of the property and the caution necessary in the management generally, and leaving him to take the measures required for the safety of his own life at sea, by picking out a crew that he can depend upon, and using his own discretion only to go to sea when his hands are fit for their duties. Both skipper and hands are generally paid by the trip, not by the month; and thus made to feel it their interest, as well as it is the owner's, to make good as many trips as they can. It was one of this sort of skippers whom Willoughby Bracton hailed from the Market Wharf, as he saw him getting all ready for a start, on board "the Little Bee," as she lay moored a few fathoms off from the wharf.

"Hoy! 'board the *Bee*! Where's your skipper?"

"I b'lieve I'm some'at o' the sort myself," replied the man addressed, a very deliberate sort of person of about thirty; thickset, and with a countenance in which gravity and good-humour were about equally portrayed. Probably to

any other kind of questioner he would have paid no further attention, but have gone on quietly coiling the ropes; but seeing Willoughby in a blue jacket and trousers and black waistcoat, and recognising a sort of chief-mate tone in his hail, he stood still and looked at him.

"You run to Broken Bay, don't you?"

"Yes."

"When are you off?"

"Now; directly. Tide's beginning to run down strong; and there's a wind coming that'll carry us from one anchorage to the other: that is, if we can save the tide at the mouth of Broken Bay; it's coming round to the south as fast as it can come, and looks as if it meant to blow pretty fresh."

"I want a passage? You go to Brisbane Water for timber, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Do you know a settler of the name of Kable there?"

"Ay; a native. There's a boat of his just dropped down the harbour; but it'll be too late for you to catch her. I can give you a passage. We shall be off his wharf to-night, if all's well."

"Send your 'dingy' then," said Willoughby,

using professional freedom, on seeing the dingy was not yet hoisted in, and no waterman's boat was at hand. The skipper of the *Bee* was too glad of the chance of an extra hand to demur adding that accommodation to his former proffer ; so after turning himself deliberately round, and lifting his Scotch cap and scratching his head, he got into the dingy, and pulled Willoughby aboard.

In another half hour the *Little Bee* was splashing rapidly along the lively surface of the water, which alternately flashed with the oblique rays of the late afternoon sun, and gloomed under the first clouds of a southerly breeze. The young mariner's mind was soon at ease about her points as a sailer ; away she skimmed, like a strong young sea-bird, down the harbour, past island, and battery, and point. The golden glow of Australia's evening sun lay rich upon whole provinces of lofty woodland, following round in the distance the windings of the stream. On went the *Little Bee*. And now the broad reach is gained, whence the eye looks suddenly out through the giant portal of those enormous crags, the 'Heads,' into the main ocean. Brisker blows the breeze, and fairer to it still lays the course of

the lively little craft ; and forth she bounds into the blue and dancing billows of the open sea. The wind was now as fair as a wind could be, and after securing good sea-room and shifting the ballast to steady her better with a wind right aft, all hands gathered round the fire that was smouldering in a large tin vessel which looked very like a saucepan with holes cut round it, and lit their short pipes ; whilst Willoughby took his trick at the helm.

The whole line of the shore, as they now had it on the larboard beam, is one mass of magnificent crag. Here and there, appears an inlet or a strip of beach ; but the general impression is, that of one of the most rock-bound of coasts. The sun was setting full over the land, and its last rays shot over the rocks, throwing their precipitous face into deep shadow, and giving to the ocean barrier a frowning aspect in accordance with the forlorn and mighty task assigned to it.

A balloon view of Port Jackson and Broken Bay would exhibit them as two great sea-inlets about twenty miles distant from each other : Port Jackson smaller, possessing fewer arms, but unequalled for security in heavy weather, and (what is more important for the exigencies of a capital)

affording egress through an adjacent country entirely clear of steep mountainous tracts; whilst, on the other hand, Broken Bay, penetrating a part of the land singularly broken and mountainous, labours under the disadvantage of the utmost difficulty of access from the land side, but breaks away into a number of arms or minor bays. The latter peculiarity of course arises from the former; the mountain streams meeting the salt-water from all quarters, either by the deep fissures of the land, or else by cutting their channels till they have got far below the salt-water level.

There are no less than seven of these minor openings from the sides of the main bay into the mountain district around. Of these, three take an inland direction back towards Sydney, the remaining four stretch on toward the north. Betwixt them, or in at the very head of the main bay, flows the Hawkesbury River; one of the most considerable for population and produce, and one of the best for navigation and tracts of good alluvial soil, in the colony. Brisbane Water, on the other hand, is the first, and by far the most considerable, of the arms on the side most distant from Sydney, and consequently pierces the land in the opposite direction. Broken into the most



irregular outlines, bordered by tracts of excellent soil, it bids fair in future ages to be at once the most sequestered, romantic, and flourishing of settlements; affording a rural retreat from the toil and glare and dust of the capital during the mid-heat of summer. Already, numerous farms enliven its ever-varying shores: here, one occupies a headland; there, two nestle together on opposite sides of some small creek, almost down at water level betwixt higher land; while many are seen lying back at the head of little bights; and others again specking a long tract of low beach with the hills rising by long and gradual ascent behind.

From the Market Wharf, whence Willoughby started, to the great "Heads," where Port Jackson yields up its waters to the ocean, is a run, with a favourable wind, of seven or eight miles; from the North Head to the southernmost head of Broken Bay, another vast point of rock called Barrenjueh, may be called, in round numbers, twenty; and from Barrenjueh Point to the head of Brisbane Water—a broad flat shore, to the very edge of which come down the magnificent gum forests, and most like the round end of a lake—can scarcely be made, in sailing, under a dozen

miles: a total of forty miles, a steamer might diminish the distance a little. The tide delaying all the boats going into Broken Bay, for some time, off Broken Bay Heads, the *Little Bee* made her anchorage but a short time before midnight. Reuben's craft dropped her anchor abreast of his own wharf on the west side, at four or five miles short of its extremity; the *Bee* was somewhat lower down, where she had to take in her next load.

This was the first time that Willoughby had been without companionship of much interest on his own element in this quarter of the world; the first time for some months that he had had a horizon clear of trees, or of some other interruption. And when he looked up at the dark sky, twinkling with ten thousand stars, but only in a small section near the horizon recognised those he had been used to gaze at from his childhood, he became suddenly conscious that he was in a new land — more conscious by far than he had become amidst the endless tracts of the interior. The width of water from shore to shore was several miles; but, hemmed round as it was on all sides by high lands, and reached by a long and winding channel impenetrable to the roll of

the ocean, its surface displayed scarcely a ripple. The wind had sunk, the boatmen had stowed themselves away below for the night, and there was no sound from anything nigh at hand except the quick and plashy rattle which a fast-flooding tide makes against the round bottom of a boat. The bordering land lay like darkness itself, showing in a few places only a solitary light, where some tree smouldered away in red charcoal without blaze, or where a party of clearers roused together their logs at the midnight summons of their mate on watch, filling the air for a few moments with a roar of flame and a burst of sparks. Now and then a watchdog bayed out suddenly from some point where there was a farm, and then a whole chorus rang right round the whole shore of the bay, the barkings and their echoes mingling in strangest mimicry; so that even the animals themselves would suddenly pause, and seem to listen and wonder to hear their deep-mouthed clamours thus answered; and then they would utter again one sharp single bark, and listen—and often so for many times together.

These small crafts have often not a bed or a blanket aboard: it was thus with the *Bee*. The hands were well enough pleased with their

passenger to have given him up a bed, if they had had one; but they had not. When Willoughby lifted up the hatch, and jumped down into the dark hold, he crawled first over the bulky body of the skipper, and, judging he should better himself but little by going further, folded his monkey-jacket close around him, and stretched himself to rest on the planks, as he had many a time done before in far less clement latitudes.

Willoughby's rest terminated before the heavy sleep of the sailors, whose nights were often broken in upon by their trips; whilst, between getting cargo in and out on the one part and spending their dollars on the other, they devoted very little time to supplying the deficiency by day when in harbour. As he stood up and turned off the hatch, he saw the sun was risen; and springing up on deck, the western shore of Brisbane Water displayed itself for several miles downward, and again upward to its broad curved extreme, smiling under the cheerful light of the almost level rays; while a light mist circled in places along the face of the water. The prospect was varied with every feature of a shore, from the bluff headland of gray moss-covered stone

and the glibber gunyah,\* where the fisherman or the outlaw sleeps behind his fire, far back beneath the overhanging shelf of rock, to the long shoal ground of the mud-flat and the sandy bottom where pelicans wade far out to play and fish. The sunlight and fresh air, that now penetrated into the hold, quickly dispelled the slumbers of the crew, and speedily swept away every trace of the thin mist, leaving the surface of the water like molten gold. The skipper was the first to pop his round and unkempt head out of the hatch; when, looking round for an instant without discerning his passenger, and seeing the boat still on deck, he sprang up with unwonted alacrity. An instant's survey, however, sufficed to assure him that nothing very serious had happened to that young gentleman, whose clothes were thrown into the boat, and he himself tumbling about in a state of pleasant sensation in the still and crystal flood. It is rarely that a person of at all hardy habits may not bathe with pleasure in this latitude, especially where the water

\* Aboriginal term. Literally *rock-house*. The term at the head of the page, "bogie," I suppose must be aboriginal also. It is one of the most common in daily parlance with all ranks. Its signification is *a bathe*.

comes principally from the ocean : indeed, after a night passed in his clothes, in the close hold of a decked boat, and on the planks, Willoughby rightly imagined that it would be a luxury. It may, however, in the mean time, be remembered that it was the month of June : the mid-winter of the lands of the southern seas.

The skipper lit his two-inch pipe, black with many a blast, and rich with the essential oil of a quarter of a hundredweight of negrohead, and sitting down on the deck, threw his legs over the side and watched the bather.

“ You ’ll be just in time for Kable’s breakfast,” said he at last, as Willoughby swam in. “ Stop and have a feed with us if you like, though ;—only there’s nothing but some tea and white tommy, and that cold schnapper we had for supper off Barrenjueh. If you go ashore, you ’ll have “lassions” of everything. He lives well, does young Reuben ;—as well as any settler about here.”

“ I shall go ashore,” said Willoughby, “ if you can spare a man to bring back the dingy.”

“ Oh, ay ; to be sure. You’re not going to run away with the young missis, I hope : she is the Daisy of the Bay.”

“Young missis!” exclaimed Willoughby; “why, I didn’t know Mr. Kable was married. I took him to be a single man.”—For Reuben Kable had not mentioned having any sister, and his habitual acquaintance with sailors’ jokes led Willoughby instinctively to interpret the phrase by its broadest meaning.

“Married! no: not he. They all say about here that he thinks nobody’s good enough for him. I mean young Polly, his sister.”

“Oh! is that it?” replied Willoughby, laughing. “I can’t say then what I might do. If I want to cut off some of these nights in a quarter less than no time, I suppose you’ll stow us away somewhere.”

“Ay,” said the skipper, joining in the joke, “only it’s no use to speak for a cage for a bird till you’ve cotched it. Hollo, boy, give a hand here with the dingy.”

The boy stood ready with the oar shipped astern by the time that Willoughby was dressed; and he, passing the little token of good-will which all orders and ranks of conveyancers love so well into the skipper’s palm, stepped over the side into it, and departed.

His course was toward a fine square-sided tract of cultivated ground, abreast of the craft,

except by about half a mile ; which, on a sweeping shore, at some distance off seems nothing. It was about a quarter of a mile in length along the water-side, and about half as much in depth ; the surface being an even and gradual rise from front to back. On the upper side, nearly or quite in the middle, stood a bush cottage, with that appanage almost universal throughout the colony, as a protection from the sunbeams during the hottest period of the day, a verandah. The line of the clear ground at the further end followed the slight sweep of a deep and precipitous creek-bank ; but at this end the line was cut straight up through the forest.\* The season being that at which there is no crop on the ground, the dwelling-house, as well as the smallest buildings about it, was visible to its base. There was a rough bark-roofed barn behind one corner of the house, at the very edge of the standing timber, and behind the other, a couple of the common huts

\* We shall trust most implicitly to our Australian friends to make allowance for any little variation from the present aspect of the locality that they may find in the above sketch. It is now several years since we visited that part of the colony, and enjoyed the pleasure of tumbling about in those placid waters, after a hot afternoon's ride from a dozen miles beyond the Blue-Gum Flat.



for working hands; and nearly at the extreme of the top line again, by the creek edge, so as to flank cattle by it in driving them in, was the stockyard, with its calf-pens, and a little yoking-yard; and inside the large yard the usual gallows, of some twelve or thirteen feet high, with a block and hook attached for hauling up a slaughtered bullock, during that process which is familiarly termed "taking his jacket off."

Reuben Kable's only housekeeper was his sister, a girl of eighteen;—nor had she now any stated companion of her own sex and age, except the daughter of an old couple two miles off, who came and remained with her during her brother's absence. Their parents had now been dead several years; and, until within the last twelvemonths, an aged woman, who had been her nurse from infancy, together with the old man her husband, had lived on the farm. One of those peculiarities of determination which the declining intellect is sometimes found to manifest, had about so long since led the old man (who had always been a favourite servant, and treated accordingly) to remove to Mangrove Creek, one of the higher watercourses falling into Broken Bay, and commence settler himself. Since that period, not

knowing of any other aged woman capable of supplying old Margaret Bradshawe's place, and indeed well knowing that they should find none whom they should regard with the same affection as the old nurse of their childhood, Reuben and Mary Kable had contented themselves to remain as Willoughby now found them.

Reuben Kable, the reader is already acquainted with. His sister was but little like him in anything but simplicity of character: that they both possessed; possibly deriving it as much from the tone of mind impressed upon them by the old nurse, as from natural tendency. One other quality, however, the brother and sister had in common—affection for each other. A stranger might easily have mistaken the sister for the young wife, as she bounded down the path of an evening to meet Reuben returning with the long duck-gun under his arm, or the oars on his shoulder; clasping her arms round his waist, and hanging about him till they reached the hill-top, shaking and sinking her head, as, with his disengaged hand, he mischievously tangled the long, fine tresses she had so carefully arranged; then, as they drew near the door, bounding as rapidly in-doors to re-arrange them, and make

sure that Jemmy—the old, pursy, barber-like convict, their only companion, whom they had made a cook of because they thought it a pity to put him to hard work, and “must have somebody,”—had everything ready for tea; and then, as her brother sat down opposite to her at the tea-table, springing across to Reuben, and with one of those soft and beautiful hands pressing either cheek, enfingering a kiss on his forehead: the thrill and sound of which put to flight all his gravity, and made him laugh for the first time throughout the day from the very depth of his chest. The dullest looker-on would have got so far as the hypothetical predicate, that if that young rustic beauty was not a wife, all had not yet become as it ought to be.

“There is many a true word spoken in jest,” runs the proverb: but little did Willoughby Bracton surmise how particularly true was to prove the prophetic guess of the skipper. And as little did Mary Kable imagine whom she was speaking of, when, a little after sunrise that morning, she came in doors and said to her brother, “I declare, Reuben, there’s one of those mad fellows of sailors belonging to the *Little Bee*, swimming about this cold morning in the very middle of the bay.” Where-

upon Reuben, concluding that his own craft also must have come up to the wharf (which was hidden by the lower corner of the bush), put on his broad-brimmed straw-hat, and walked down to see; whilst Mary went in-doors to urge old Jemmy to make haste with the breakfast.

As he emerged from the short bush road on to the top of the little bluff, the first thing the Australian saw was the tapering mast of his craft; the second, the *Bee's* dingy shooting rapidly over to the point where he stood, with the boy standing in the stern, paddling, and a regular blue-jacket sitting face forward on the thwart, to bestow his weight most advantageously for her progress: for the dingies carried by the lesser vessels of the musquito fleet are about the most ticklish things that stem the salt-water.

Before the dingy reached the bank, Reuben recognised with surprise and pleasure Willoughby Bracton.

"I'm out of your debt now," said the young sailor, as the nose of the boat ran home against the broken grassy bank, where there was plenty of water just astern of the craft;—"my promise is kept."

"And just in time for breakfast," returned his friend, stretching out his long arm to Willoughby,

as he bounded up, and giving him a tug that it required all his agility to prevent from terminating in an all-fours.

The men of his own schooner now began to tumble up from the hold, at the sound of voices alongside, and Reuben, after getting the report of their trip, and the Sydney invoices of the back cargo, invited his friend to proceed homeward. A whole pack of those fine dogs so serviceable in a bush life greeted their approach. The breed is one which, taking the grayhound as its basis, mingles with that of the lurcher, mastiff, and bulldog in interminable variety; presenting generally, however, a dog of great speed and bone, and often first-rate scent, as well as sagacity. These noble animals are oftentimes to be seen about homesteads, lying by on the sick-list, cut almost to pieces in their savage struggles with the wolfish warregal of the bush, or by the goring talons of the kangaroo; and sometimes in a state of premature decay from the effects of fractures, and those many wounds whose remains are not only the bald seams on the skin, but other and deeper left upon the nervous system, rendering the animal perpetually sleepy, or irritable, according to the bias of natural temperament.

The loud bay of the pack, as they suddenly dashed off at the alarm uttered by the first who happened to discern the stranger, informed Mary Kable that her brother was not returning alone; and she hastened across to the parlour window to ascertain who it might be. Her brother and his guest were walking rapidly and familiarly up the path, side by side, stopping abruptly now and then, and looking as Reuben pointed in various directions. Her brother was carrying the stranger's monkey-jacket, which, as the leader of the pack bounded forward at Willoughby, he made use of to tumble the dog heels over head with. It chanced to be Mary's favourite old dog; one that had licked her face in the cradle, and fondled her in her childhood; and she was angry with Reuben, and grateful to the stranger for holding out his hand to the discomfited "Tony." The faithful dog slunk away, carrying the rest of the pack gradually off; and trotting back, with frequently reverted heads and stifled growls, to the top of the hill, they posted themselves all round Mary, as she came out and stood in front of the verandah.

"Reuben, how could you knock poor old Tony over in that way?" she exclaimed, before the

young men were near enough for Kable to introduce his friend.

“ Better,” said Reuben, “ for a dog to have a tumble than a man a bite ; especially from that old ruffian : he always makes his teeth meet. He’s got a way of snapping, Mr. Bracton, like a native dog : he doesn’t bite : and his teeth, old as he is, are sure to go jam through whatever he aims at. This is my sister : she’s a very good girl ; but she’d sooner see you with a great tear in your arm or leg than have a finger laid on Tony. Look at him now ; how he stands grinning at me, as much as to say,—‘ Touch me, if you dare, now I’m beside my mistress !’ Go to kennel, sir. Off ! None of your old soldiering.”

“ No, no : let him stop, Reuben. He won’t hurt Mr. Bracton now.”

“ Will you be bail for him ?”

“ Yes.”

“ I who am the principal party concerned, Miss Kable,” said Willoughby, “ am perfectly satisfied with the security. Indeed, Mr. Kable interfered in my behalf almost needlessly : dogs never bite me. There’s not an animal in the world, even man himself, that feels and is put down by a strong manifestation of contempt so readily as the dog.”

“Then I am sure,” said Mary, laughing, “my brother ought to have managed Tony without the pilot-coat. But come brother; come, Mr. Bracton, breakfast is ready.”

As she spoke, the Australian maid led the way forward into the little breakfast-parlour. The room, which was furnished in a genteel domestic way, not gaudily, looked out upon the glittering face of the bay, and was full of the rich, mellow lustre shed into a shady spot by a large surface of reflection. Three or four boats were now urging their way from various farms on the shores towards the little crafts at anchor, which were expected to have brought down packages for them from Sydney; and the hills opposite lay under the full light of the sun, now rising immediately behind the house.

The dress of the young girl was as simple as the life she led; her gown of fine cotton print, of a small pattern, with collar of its own material, fitted nicely her compact and shapely form, and fell in ample folds to her well-formed and neatly-shod feet. And, under the lace frill that encircled her small neck, impelled by the more than ordinary chillness of the morning, she had hastily tied a silken kerchief of pale blue, fasten-



ing it, in unconscious imitation of her brother, with a sailor's knot. She was of the medium height, and of those delicate and slender proportions which subsist in connection with the highest degree of activity in woman; whilst the mirthful and almost childlike confidence of her manner, imparted to all she did and said an unperceived but irresistible appeal for a like return.

The breakfast which appeared upon the table did fullest justice to the pre-commendations of the skipper of the *Bee*. There was true bush tea, with cream and new eggs, white as the driven snow; butter in pats, neat as the hostess's own little hand; a broad dish of rumpsteaks, steaming hot, and damper, white and light as it could have come from the oven of the most accomplished baker, and for shape a perfect picture.

Willoughby, almost unconsciously, as he took a deliberate survey of the domestic department of his friend's homestead, gave utterance to an expression of surprise at its neat and comfortable trim.

"It was very different, I assure you," said Mary, "twelve months ago, when I came from school. Reuben, I must tell you, has been a bit of a tyrant to me in two or three instances; I

wanted to begin housekeeping two years before I could persuade him to let me."

"Really, Miss Kable, he appears to have hit upon exactly the right time."

"Indeed," said Reuben Kable, "I took no responsibility in the matter. I simply asked her schoolmistress whether she was fit to leave school; and when that lady said yes, I was very glad to have her at home with me. A pretty job I had to get her there at first; it wasn't likely I was going to have it for nothing. The fact is, Mr. Bracton, I used her so, when she was little, to having me for a stock-horse to hunt the pigs out of the ground, that, when she came to be ten or eleven years of age, I used to come home and find her, and the young damsel she has to help her in the household affairs, with the bridle on one of my horses, and riding him all about the bush. Why, you know, I was obliged to do something. Old Margaret was lame, so that she used to get away from her; and what I said to her always went in at one ear and out at the other. So I found her her match at last."

"Schoolmistresses are no good," said Mary, with an evident manifestation of the antiquity of the dogma in her mind; "I knew all that is of

any use to me before I saw one. At all events, I learned nothing worth learning but music: I could sew as well seven years ago as I can now; and as to French, of what use is that? I am not going to France."

"Well," said her brother, "if for nothing else, the money was well bestowed in associating you for a few years with other young ladies, instead of your riding, along with that other lass, like two little Amazons, about the bush. But never mind the past. Find us a couple of ducks and a plum-pudding for dinner, or something of the sort, and you shall have it all your own way about the schoolmistress; Mr. Bracton and I want to have a stroll round the ground. Here's a piece of capital Brazil, Willoughby, which I got, in spite of queen and constitution, from one of the vessels from the Brazils. Fill; and we'll smoke as we go. But, oh! here's the side-saddle coming."

"Is it not a sweet one, sir?" said Mary, as she exhibited a natty, little saddle such as ladies use.

"What cunning little monkeys they are," exclaimed Reuben, after the handsome, little side-saddle had been duly admired, and they were on their way down the path toward the water.

“That was meant, you know, as a protest that she doesn’t ride Amazon-fashion now.”

“I suppose so,” said Willoughby, laughing.

A very pleasant morning succeeded. An hour was spent at the water-side; where the hands, having got out their few packages from Sydney for the house and for various other farms around, were beginning to run in a load of house-timber through the stern port: the common way of loading many of these small craft, in which the hold is only thus accessible for long pieces of bush stuff. Afterwards, running the water’s edge down to the south-side line, they followed it all round through the bush toward the creek, which bounded the farm on the north. The back line—running just clear of immense masses of broken rock that had shot down from the mountain, and lay scattered about, gray and desolate looking, and covered the ground all about with the sandy detritus, into which they had for ages been mouldering—presented an assurance of solitariness on that side not to be mistaken. On crossing the creek, however, and turning toward the water’s edge, they again came upon a scope of clear ground.

Unlike Reuben Kable’s, it was situated in the

midst of the bush, and at some distance from the water-side. No smoke, as they approached, was seen to curl up from the roof, no dogs ran barking forth to meet the strangers; the fences were broken; only grass and weeds were growing on the cultivated ground; marsh-mallows almost hid the stockyard, whilst, in front of the house, a mob of seven or eight wild cattle were warily feeding, and, at the first yelp of the dogs, plunged furiously away through the broken panels into the bush.

“A forsaken farm?” inquired Willoughby.

“Yes; and very foolishly forsaken. There was a murder committed behind in the mountains yonder, by one convict upon another, as they were going to hospital together; the inducement being a solitary sovereign, that the old man who was the victim had got to supply himself with a few luxuries beyond the hospital diet; and ever since the tale has been, that the murdered old man makes nocturnal peregrinations down to this spot. It was from this farm that he set out: he had been assigned to the owner for several years; and the report was (after his death: I never heard it before) that he had got together a good bit of money, and, when he went

to the hospital, had left all but the one sovereign planted (or hidden) under some stump on the farm. However, whether it was only the owner's conscience smote him (for he was a hard man), or whether he actually saw something, he bolted in the course of a few weeks, and has been in Sydney ever since. There's one thing about it, the ground on this side of the creek is by no means first-rate soil; it lies low and cold."

"I was thinking," said Willoughby, "I might perhaps get it at a bargain."

"Do you mean to have another farm beside that at the Morrumbidgee?"

"That is not my property. Wherever I settle, I must have a piece of ground, like yours, on the water-side. I have been envying you ever since you first described to me the situation of this little farm of yours, as we rode to Manaroo."

"There is only half of it mine; the other half is my sister's. But there is some Government land on the other side of ours. How much money do you mean to lay out?"

"I have about nine hundred pounds of my own."

"You'll do no good with so much here, unless you mean taking to the axe and plough, and

having a regular agricultural farm. This is no sheep country, nor is it a good part for cattle: they get into the mountains and the breed degenerates. Allow me to say, however, that nothing would give me greater pleasure than to have you for a neighbour."

Here the conversation dropped, so far as the particular subject was concerned, on which the young men happened to have reached so decidedly coincident an opinion.

Mary Kable applied herself to her culinary duties that day with more than ordinary steadiness, in more than ordinary silence, taking more than ordinary care that everything should be without fault. Toward the close of the afternoon, Reuben was compelled to retreat to a more quiet apartment, to prepare his letters and the account of the boat's load for Sydney. Mary, her morning dress exchanged for one of brown silk, with a deep rich lace-collar, took out her work and sat down with it in the light of the window, for the sun was sinking into a beclouded horizon; and Willoughby, who had been sitting on the same side, instinctively drew back his chair and turned towards her. Mary had now become the sole object of Willoughby's attention; and his

mere mental approbation of her passed rapidly into intense feeling. For a few moments she was unconscious of the earnest gaze that was fixed upon her ; then, though she lifted not her eyes, the second-sight of womanhood began to warn her. At first a little anger shot through her heart ; then a slight sense of shame came over her ; and then a feeling of joy. With the joy came back her self-possession, and woman's consciousness of her power, and the impulse to take a bit of mirthful revenge.

"What was it you were saying last, sir ?" asked Mary, as she moved the hand hither and thither, that expanded the stocking foot as if to examine her work critically in several positions.

"Last !" exclaimed Willoughby. "My dear Miss Kable, pray forgive me ; really I have behaved very rudely.—What a very dark afternoon it has become !"

"A little while before Reuben went out you were beginning to tell me about your mother and sisters : I think you said you had two sisters."

"One sister, about your own age, and a cousin, whom we have called our sister till we have almost forgotten that she is not so."



"Whom I shall have the honour—the pleasure, some of these days, if you come to live near us, of seeing as Mrs. Bracton, junr.," said Mary, as gaily as she could.

"Oh dear, no! My cousin and I have been joined in holy wedlock by our neighbours ever since we were children: but there seems," added Willoughby with a remarkably good humoured sort of contentment, "very little probability of our entering into the holy state."

"Then you don't like one another?"

"Oh yes! Katharine is a delightful creature in every respect: but she has always maintained that she could not bear to marry a sailor; so I never troubled myself to fall in love with her."

"But why was that? I mean, why will she not marry a sailor?"

"She says she should live in a perpetual fright."

"Well, but surely there must be sailors as well as other people, Mr. Bracton. I don't think that's fair. Reuben is half his time on the water, and I never feel frightened. At least, I am frightened only when it blows very hard."

"I wonder you don't feel very lonely here by yourself when Reuben is away."

"I have a young woman to come and stay with

me : and then there's the old cook, and all the men at the huts close by."

"And Tony?"

"Oh, yes, dear old Tony! He always takes possession of the hearth-rug as soon as my brother goes away. I really think he knows when Reuben is going to start: he begins to assume a sort of command over all the other dogs directly he sees the quart-pot and hobbles strapped to the saddle."

"Does n't this haunted house make you feel uncomfortable?"

"No; I never think about it. Till the ghost comes to me, I shall never trouble myself about him. My greatest loneliness was when we came to have our old nurse no longer; we had been used to her so many years, that she was become a second mother to us. Dear old Margaret taught us both to read; and taught me to sew and to cook, and indeed everything of a household sort. Reuben was quite young when our parents died, and I was a mere child. She promised my mother never to forsake us till we could take care of ourselves; and she performed her promise most faithfully. I never could think how she could come to be transported."

“ Was she, then, a convict originally ? ”

“ Oh, yes ! Did you not understand that before ? Poor Margaret ! when first I remember her, she used to sit on a Sunday, when there was little to do, and cry for hours together. When she was transported, they took her child from her — was not that cruel ? — a fine little fellow of four years old. She was assigned to us immediately from the ship, and my mother did everything she could to secure the conveyance of her letters safely ; but Margaret could never hear any tidings of the child. Perhaps it died, and they would not send her word, thinking her badly enough off already ; still, it would have been better than such suspense. But some people are very ignorant in such things ; and others are very hard-hearted. However, by degrees she took to Reuben. It was a sad affair to her when old John would rent a piece of ground at Mangrove Creek. And Reuben, I believe, will never be happy till he gets her back.”

“ Why did they not have a piece of ground of your brother ? ” inquired Willoughby.

“ The old man, it seems, wanted to sell rum on the sly ; and here there are no customers : there, there are plenty. Mangrove Creek is a

sad, wild place in that respect. I am sure it will never suit Margaret."

Again Reuben Kable made his appearance, and a pleasant tea-time followed. A few further words, which passed in the course of the evening, determined the direction of future events.

"You decide, then," said the Australian, "to return to Sydney by this boat?"

"Yes," replied Willoughby; "I think it desirable. I cannot call the bargain, as yet, complete; and as you consider the sheep so well worth what is asked for them, the sooner I make the purchase secure the better."

"Very well. I'll tell one of the hands to come up and call you, if there's a wind. At all events, there will not be one now till full flood—about three o'clock in the morning. Mary, don't let our friend go without something for his dinner, if the wind does not carry them up to Port Jackson. Now, I am about to make a proposal to you, Mr. Bracton: meantime, I wish my views not to control yours at all, for I never like running the risk of persuading another in money matters; but I shall be pleased if you should happen to coincide in opinion with me. I have been thinking, for some time past, of

buying a larger boat, and trading with her on the various arms of Broken Bay. It is on account of the numerous small arms into which it breaks, that the inlet bears that name; and on the banks of all these arms there are located settlers of the second and third rank, almost innumerable. Many of them keep timber-getting establishments, and supply Sydney with building stuff; all grow corn and wheat; many cultivate and cure tobacco: so there is import for the capital. As to export—you see how we live in the bush—a very large amount of stores is required from Sydney for this locality; but most of the skippers of the boats already in the trade are quite unacquainted with the settlers. Indeed, it cannot be otherwise, for they often do not stay in the trade beyond a few months. On the other hand, I know every settler of any standing, from the Green Hills in the Hawkesbury to Barrenjueh; and what sort of ‘pay’ he is. Now, if it suits you to join me in a snug little sloop, and sail her yourself—by buying all the stuff we load with, and so loading on our own account, and your selling again on Sydney wharf without an intermediate agent; and then again making all the purchases of stores for back freight with

cash—we can make a very good thing of it. And if you should conclude to buy a section of land next ours, I'll look after the felling and burning off, and fencing and cropping of it for you, 'free-gratis,' as my countrymen say. What do you say?"

"My brother has lost two boats already: it's a most dangerous run," remarked Mary, in a plaintive tone, without lifting her eyes from her work.

"Lost two boats? I? Not one!" exclaimed her brother. "Two lubbers of skippers lost 'em for me, if you like."

"Well, I mean that, Reuben. You know how many do get lost, one way and another, between here and Sydney Heads."

"Any time," said the Australian, with that rigid curl of the upper lip, and iron set of his ivory features, which marked the passage through his mind of deep vexation,—“Any time that Mr. Bracton thinks it's likely to blow too hard, I'll run her the trip myself, and he can take a spell. Oh, Polly, Polly!" he added, as he jumped up and took three or four long strides about the room, and strove to laugh away his irritation, "you are a contrary, little thing. Now, what are

Willoughby's and my affairs to you? Spoilt yourself, you are only fit to spoil everything else."

"No, no, Kable," interposed Willoughby, rising and pushing him back into his chair. "She has not spoilt this: just the contrary. I shall do what you propose."

"My beautiful brother," said Mary, as she stepped across into his arms, "what are you so angry with me for? There now," she continued, as after an instant she wiped her brother's face with her handkerchief, "your head is all in a steam of perspiration again in a minute. That's always the way, sir, when he gets into one of his pets with me. You should not do so, Reuben: you know you are always ill for two or three hours afterwards. Come, I'll sing to you."

Mary hastened to the instrument. But on the occasion there was particularly little need for it: the two young men were already quietly exchanging smiles. Either from the appositeness of the subject, or to awaken another train of strong associations in her brother's mind, Mary Kable selected a little song of the old nurse's which was a favourite with him, and to which she had added a bass herself. After the few first notes, however, she paused, and asked Reuben if he preferred that

one. "You know it is in the dialect of the north of England, where Margaret came from. Will Mr. Bracton understand it?"

"I was a good deal in and out of the harbours on that coast when I was a boy," said Willoughby.

"Then you'll like it. Sing it, Polly. 'The Fisherman's Widow;' is n't that the title?"

"No, brother; '*The Maniac Mother*.'"

Look'st\* thou, my bairn! no clouds—but a moon!

Feyther† or friend, thou hast never a yan;‡

Look'st honie, yon;—but it maun § be too soon:—

They say that thy feyther cometh again. ||

Look'st thou, sweet bairn!—'t was here he loved me;—

Red and white hedge-roses mingle and kiss;

Look'st honie, now!—he comes to love thee:

Thou art mine—thou art mine, and I'm seere ¶ thou art his.

Hist thou, dear bairn! or we never shall hear:—

I know it—I know it; thou art thin clad and cold;

Nay, honie, hist! I'm cold too, I'm seere,

But a fisherman's boy should be bonnie and bold.

Come, honie, kiss! What, so cold and so stiff!

See, see, the boat's filling; he calls thee and me:

'Tis his own calm shout in the roar of the reef:—

We'll away o'er the cliff, through the air, to the sea.

\* Look (imper.)

† Father.

‡ One.

§ Must.

|| As an apparition.

¶ Sure.



About half-past three on the following morning, one of the hands knocked impatiently at Willoughby's window, under the verandah, at the back of the cottage. "Fair wind, sir!—beginning to stir pretty fresh,—please to make haste." On stepping aboard, a little covered wicker basket was pointed out to him as having been sent down by the young mistress for the passenger: it contained a dish of cold beef steaks and bread; tea and sugar, tied up in little square bags of new longcloth, (evidently fresh from the needle;) a bottle of milk, a bottle of wine, and a little pot of preserves. The wind was northerly:—a run to the southward;—a short reach out to sea;—down the coast;—and Sydney Heads.

## CHAPTER IX.

Beck's tactics.—Shearing and Harvest.—Keeping Christmas in the Bush.—John Thomas and Biddy.—The Jewess.—Beck's trap for the Welshman.

WILLOUGHBY BRACON having fulfilled the object of his journey down the country, once more proceeded to the Rocky Springs. The gratification of the family at his return amongst them was, however, sorely marred by the announcement of the plan he had adopted for pursuing his own future fortunes. Although, as he had told Reuben Kable, he had all along felt an increasing repugnance to an entire renunciation of the sea, and to a final separation from scenery he was so long accustomed and so partial to, he had never made any mention of his feelings to his relatives, or hinted the probability that he would do otherwise than continue permanently with them. His natural character, like his mother's, tended mainly to pursue unpretendingly, and steadily, that which presented itself immediately to him as the duty

of the time : educationally following his father, he had become a bold and skilful seaman.

For the present, also, however numerous might have been his thoughts, he said nothing of Mary Kable : Reuben *alone* had to bear all the odium of his unwelcome change. Katharine only, as if by instinct, appeared to comprehend the whole matter : she argued that Willoughby's attached friend, and the frank and able benefactor of their fortunes at so critical a juncture, must be neither a worthless nor an ordinary man ; and her protest alone was interposed between the brief, but sharp, reprobatory remark of her relatives and the unknown. For the first time in her life she felt, with pain, that it was possible for the benefactors of her childhood, and the endeared friends of so many years,—for even them to be injurious and faulty, as well as others of our kind. Happily for Katharine, whose moral decisions on any matter were intuitive, none of her family were infected by that littleness of mind that goes out of its way to carp at the absent. The singular precision of her judgments, also, and the almost ideal beauty of her attachments, had given her opinion great weight amongst them ; though both one and the other were rather felt than comprehended.

The increased activity and entertainment resulting from the advance of the farm affairs, however, tended to mitigate the pain of this circumstance.

Willoughby, also, remained some weeks to superintend the new measures incident to the arrival of the flocks, which arrived rather earlier than was expected: the construction of paling-yards, or hurdle enclosures, being a job of some time, "bough-yards" had to be got up, together with such huts as would suffice till permanent stations were fixed upon. These bough-yards are formed by merely felling the trees that surround an area of sufficient size for the folding of the flock roomily by night, and then, after lopping off all the limbs, running the barrels into a line of circumference, and piling on them the lopped limbs, till a fence of four or five feet high is made good; an entrance way being left, which is stopped by a rough frame of any sort that can be quickly knocked together. The huts for such bough-yards, are usually either tent-shaped huts of bark or others of the common shape, very small, and rudely put together. The home-station again was enlivened by the going to and fro of so many more men; the addition to a head-station of several

flocks of sheep, with their shepherds, and hut-keepers, and the necessary train of dogs, makes a great difference to its business and population.

Martin Beck's tact and industry again displayed itself in the new branch of his duties. His stations were well and rapidly made, and their sites ably chosen; but not without annoyance to Morgan Brown. The black, however, was too conscious of the power of control inherent in his own character, to neglect exhibiting his usefulness to his employer on account of Morgan's soreness on the point. Injury to him he knew the stockman could do none, without injuring himself, which he was well aware he would not; and the mere irritation and vindictiveness of Morgan he felt only as a tool to be turned to this or that use, or thrown aside at any time, by ten words spoken just when and how he thought fit.

Beck judged rightly that by bringing strongly out before his employers his capacity of promoting their undertakings in business, he should withdraw their perception from the other parts of his character; and he as justly inferred that his colour and race rendered him an object of imperfect sympathy to the ladies, and laid him open

to a more severe and scrutinous observation from them. He might not reason out the conclusion, but he was perfectly conscious of the fact intuitively : it needs scarcely be added that he was under no error. Mrs. Bracton regarded him with as much tacit aversion as she was capable of entertaining ; yielding, however, to Lieutenant Bracton's self-gratulations at having met with so useful a man, and forgetting her dislike for the moment. To Katharine, Beck was a mystery ; she saw the half of his acts, but felt the whole of his character ; and, perplexed with the seeming uncharitableness of her own feelings toward the man, tried not to think upon the point at all. She suggested to herself whether his colour were not the origin of an imperceptible and unjust prejudice ; and, her mind being essentially feminine and not searchingly intellectual, she had to leave the question undecided. Marianna, on the other hand, went on from day to day, and from month to month, contracting toward him the most definite and unqualified aversion ; and the more he became sensible where the greatest danger to him lay, and endeavoured by obsequiousness and studied services to conciliate her, the more the young lady abominated him. Biddy,

too, had "a down" upon him, because it was well known that he had "a down" on John Thomas.

"Biddy," asked her young mistress one morning, as she was setting the milk just before breakfast, "when shall you move into your new dairy? Our overseer says it's now quite ready, and the weather is getting very hot: a half underground place, with the roof so well sodded over as the new dairy is, will make the milk keep much longer, and give the cream more time to rise."

"Fait', Miss, I don't know if I'll go there at all: I shall be always thinkin' the devil 'll fetch me out of it,—sure 'twas one of his imps that built it. Musha! bad luck to him every day he rises."

"Fie, fie, Biddy! that's all on John's account. Well, we must all allow that he is not amiss for a Welshman."

"Och, then, Miss Mary Ann, and you've got nobody of your own!"

"Me, Biddy! What do you mean? Who?"

"The more fortune to him, Miss, for your sake; and it's not me that should say that to a captain of the peelers, only for the likes of you! Sorra a boy they left about our cabin that they didn't lag before Biddy Carney was twelve year old.

Bad cess to 'em all ! barrin' young Mishtur Hurley, for your sake, Miss."

Marianna turned off this remark, as well as she might; humming a tune, and trying to conceal a slight blush of consciousness, by averting her face and walking in doors.

Biddy was the very channel through which Beck was principally apprehensive of a suspicion of his doings reaching Lieutenant Bracton. Working cattle often wander very widely when left a few days unyoked: a bullock-driver has frequently to traverse the extreme of a circle extending many miles every way around the farm; and the Welshman had occasionally to bring back his bullocks from the upper part of Coolarama Creek. In these journeys Beck was aware that it was not at all impossible that John Thomas might recognise some calf which he had first seen in Lieutenant Bracton's herd, now branded with Beck's initials. The more young bullocks he had broken in for workers, the more likely was such a discovery to take place; for every fresh beast, and especially since they were also necessarily young ones, involved a more extensive and frequent search of the run and the adjacent country by the driver. And here again there appeared a remarkable trait



of this singular man's character : rather than quell the natural bias of his disposition to thrift, even as the mere agent of another ; and rather than relinquish the inclination to secure himself applause, he risked the additional peril for the sake of establishing a reserve team ; and great as was the peril, he continued to risk it with impunity.

He was not himself, however, aware of the peculiar circumstance that saved him. The bullock-driver had actually seen calves marked with Beck's brand in several instances, and more than once with Morgan Brown's brand ; and remembered them as belonging to the Rocky Springs' herd, and had even tried to drive them out of Morgan Brown's herd from a distant part of that stockman's run, where they were as much as possible kept for security. The Welshman had seen some branded with Martin Beck's

**MB**

and others with Morgan Brown's **MB** ;

the circle having been adopted by the black to distinguish his brand from Brown's. Still, he entertained no suspicion of what was going on.

It is customary with settlers in these colonies to brand occasional beasts for various members o

their families, and such are generally the best, and female cattle ; so as to lay for those individuals the foundation of a little herd of their own. The Welshman, in his simplicity, concluded that these were the respective brands of Marianna Bracton and of her mother, whose name was known to be the same : they were just such of the young cattle as would have been selected in such a case ; and if he could have run them home himself, he would have done so, out of good will to his employer. But to give Martin Beck, whose duty it was to keep the herd together, the information where they were to be pitched upon, was a stretch of courtesy beyond John Thomas's inclination. "Let him find them or lose them," he said to himself : "If he lose them, his reputation as a stock-keeper must suffer ; if he find them, it will have been at the cost of some labour." He made atonement to his own conscience by determining to keep an eye on the gathering in the stock-yard when next muster-day came, and if they were still absent, then he would inform Lieutenant Bracton where, to Beck's discredit, they had been allowed to stray for some months. Hence, Beck was neither aware of the impending danger of discovery, nor of his chance of escape.

He knew that anything the Welshman might detect, would go on by the maid to the mistress, and from Miss Bracton to her father; but as evidently nothing had reached Lieutenant Bracton, he concluded that the Welshman knew of nothing prejudicial to make known.

Thus, Beck worked on in good heart, and everything seemed to progress and to flourish under his hand: the sheep were stationed with consummate judgment of feed and water, and salubrity of position and scope of run; the stations were effectively built; and the men well selected for their particular duties. Three huts were up; and all the fencing made sound, both of the stockyard and the cultivated ground; and a dairy was dug down into a steep part of the hill side, and roofed with bark, laid on rafters and covered with earth. A new weather-boarded cottage for the family, with four good rooms, and verandah in front and behind, was in progress on the point of the hill; but so placed as to leave clear the site for the more substantial edifice hereafter; and a rich crop of wheat, sufficient for the whole consumption of the establishment, waved in the warm summer sun, and was just fit for the sickle. The proprietor might have scrutinized the progress of

many farms, before he could have found one where the same number of hands had done so much and so well in the same number of months. Altogether, Beck felt in a good humour with himself; and, though he could never forgive the Welshman's indomitable and pertinacious defiance of his control, or quite lose sight of the danger he stood in through him, he as yet retorted rather with contempt than with malevolence.

Meantime, though ignorant of Beck's actual practices, the Welshman was becoming a much more serious adversary than he supposed. John Thomas, having been acquainted for years with this part of the country, was consequently acquainted with the hutkeepers; and the hutkeepers were also acquainted with their various stockmen's character, and partially with their movements. Among them, it was well known, that Morgan Brown never "missed a chance," if such fell in his way; and when it became known that Martin Beck was often at Morgan's hut, and out on the runs with him, the conclusion arose spontaneously, that Martin Beck also was not altogether "on the square" in the matter of cattle. From the hutkeepers, this impression had been further communicated to their old

acquaintance, John Thomas; who, when out in search of his bullocks, occasionally visited them: but that severity of discipline exercised under the convict system over ticket-of-leave holders, sealed his lips from the utterance of any suspicions to his employer. An occasional vague hint had sometimes escaped him to some of the men in the hut; but it was too vague and intangible to be communicated: it was not even fully understood; nor, indeed, did the Welshman mean to render it so. Beck was understood to be a free born native; and, had he been able to prove at the police court any slanderous remarks of John Thomas's, the result would have probably been the forfeiture of the Welshman's ticket, and his consequent retrocession into a state of simple penal servitude.

The shearing season arrived, and passed; and the word was heard going round that the wheat was ready for the sickle. In a few days more, the last load rolled heavily up to the hill, and crowned the well-formed stack; and to each of the band of bronze-faced reapers, as they came one by one up from their hut to receive it, a brimming goblet was handed by the fair Katharine: for Willoughby was by this time deeply

engaged at Broken Bay, and Marianna had betaken herself to Biddy and the dairy, leaving to her cousin the more strictly domestic matters.

A good deal of work of one kind and another, but all such as must be done in the particular season, or left undone altogether, yet remained to be got through; and Lieutenant Bracton had proposed to the overseer to induce the men to put off their harvest-home merrymaking, to save time, till Christmas-day. But Beck was not by any means high in favour with some of the hands, especially the more independent strollers who had been taken on during the press of work; and being consequently apprehensive of not succeeding in carrying the point, he had evaded the task by suggesting that his employer had better speak to the men himself. Now it happened that both Lieutenant Bracton and his overseer were absent together at the very time the request should have been made; otherwise, the holiday once begun, it would have come too late; Katharine, therefore, took the duty upon herself. Among the casual hands was one of better bearing than the rest; and she waited for his turn to come, to make the appeal to him. His name on the certificate of freedom he showed, was Russell; but he

had got the title of "the lagger" (or sailor) among the men: he associated with none of his equals, and seemed to shun contact with his superiors. With a fine bold person and a noble brow, he appeared the wreck of some tremendous fortune. The string of applicants ended, and "the lagger" came not; and Katharine, firm to her purposes, as she was womanly in her choice of them, had to send for him.

"Why, Russell, you had nearly been missed."

"After I have earned nearly ten pounds on the farm, Miss, a glass of grog is neither here nor there."

"Well, but you must have one, Russell, to drink Mr. Bracton's health. Mr. Bracton would be so much obliged if the men could put off their harvest-home feast till Christmas, and then they might take two or three days for it, if they like. Will you ask them?"

"Certainly, Miss. It shall be done."

And it was; for in half an hour all the hands employed on settled jobs were busy at them.

At length came Christmas-day and the harvest-home feast together. A holiday is never an early day with working hands; to them rest is the pleasure that makes the first demand. By seven o'clock, only two or three were up, out of about

a dozen, which the business of the season had gathered in the men's hut. One of these was down at the creek washing. Another, one of those patient workers who will rather work for the common good than do nothing, is coming down the hill yonder with a log of wood on his shoulder, to add to the heap he is making in front of the hut door for the Christmas roast. The sun is just in sight above the main mountain at the head of the nook; the air is full of a warm light, and the little mist in it after the dewy night makes that light like a chastened but almost palpable glory, which seems as if you could wave your hand in and feel it: all is so still that you may hear the whirr of the milk into the milking-pail all the way from the stockyard.

Two or three more of the hands turn out of the hut: the third one erected by the overseer, with a view to the crowd of hands at the busy season; the other is forsaken, save by one sulky old man, who likes to be by himself. The hut has been built, with Beck's usual judgment, in such a style as will allow of it being used (if floored) for thrashing in, or any other purpose of a barn, when the supernumeraries are gone; its side slabs are nine feet out of the ground; its area is barn-like,



and unencumbered with any divisions, and the only chimney is an unroofed end.

Now the whole mob are up; one or two only are absent, washing themselves; the rest are all smoking round the fire, some standing, others sitting on short blocks cut transversely from small trees. Along the front of the fire are ranged ten or a dozen tin quart-pots of water for tea. The wood-getter comes in, and being already warmed by his own industry, goes to another part of the hut.—“Come, Dick, here’s room at the fire; only fetch the tea-bag along with you, for the pots are beginning.” At these seasons it is often the practice for all to mess together, as ration is dispensed almost unlimitedly.

Breakfast over, the business of the day begins. Dick is constituted barber, and good-naturedly goes over all chins. Meantime, the inquiry is heard, “I say, who’s to make the pudding? It ought to be in the pot by this.” Yonder steps forth a man, nicknamed “the dandy,” just fit to be a cook, with no superfluous fat for the warmth to act upon: a perfect lath, standing full six feet high without his shoes, in white shirt and white drill trousers both incalculably patched. The dandy selects a little black-visaged Irishman for his mate.

“You’ve got nothin’ in this here hut to make a puddin’ in : not a single dish big enough to do at three times.”

“Blood an’ tare an’ ouns, mate !” says the little sallow-visage, “make it in the bucket.”

The dandy, setting that vessel in readiness in the middle of the floor, gives his mate directions to go to the creek for a bucket of water.

“Dandy,” murmurs the easy voice of a contemplative man, who sits smoking behind the fire, with his elbows on his knees, and his chin and short pipe on his hands, “you’d best give that bucket a sloosh out, for I seen it half full of soap-sudsy water just now.”

“I wish I’d catch anybody washing in the bucket,” says the dandy, now full of the importance of his office ; “I’d make him drink every drop on it.”

“It’s the Welshman, I think,” cries one of those untiring wags, who are the pests of all sober society.

The dandy, therefore, says no more ; for, though the wantonly-libelled man is not in sight, he may be just outside within sound, and the dandy is conscious that there would be some difficulty in making John Thomas drink two table-spoonfuls.

The sallow-visage, however, now arriving with the water, the bucket is duly purified.

Fifteen pounds of flour, a dozen pounds of plums, about half as much currants, half a pound of ground allspice, a quantity of candied lemon-peel, cut in pieces about the size of a man's thumb, and abundance of suet chopped a little smaller, are at length, between the two buckets, mixed into a batter; not without almost a battle to make the little sallow-visage go and cut a sapling to stir it with, instead of the handle of his axe, which he was about to use. The pudding-bag is yet wanting: what is to be done? A true socialist gives his duck frock, which, when sewed well together along the bottom, just contains the savoury mixture, that fills the garment up to the front opening; it being then sewn across, the monster pudding is complete.

"Where 's your pot, lads?" inquires the dandy.

"Oh, we must get the cove to lend us the big pot they have for sheep-washing," is the answer.

A deputation is accordingly despatched; the grant is obtained, and the immense three-legged iron crock is brought down, slung on a pole on two men's shoulders; and being filled with water is placed over the fire, which is well supplied with

fuel. It boils at length, and in they tumble the enormous pudding.

“Who’s going to mind this pudding?”

“Dandy will.”

“Dandy won’t: Dandy’s done his share.”

“Well, somebody must.”

“Tell us something we don’t know.”

“Here comes the Welshman: he’s done nothing yet.”

“Ay, he’s the lad. Come, John; and while you’re looking on tell us how you got lagged.”

“Why,” said John Thomas, looking round with a serious and quiet self-esteem, as he walked in, putting a new thong on his whip; “I was only catch a bird in the mountain, this side of St. Asaph, and the squire send me to prison. But she do herself no good: she die in six months after. I hear about it before I come off. It is a shame! What is it in a bird to send a man to prison for, and make him come here?”

“Ah! there must have been something more than that, John,” retorted the last speaker.

“No, I tell you: I never do one single theive in all my life but that bird. She was a little thing, too; not so big as my hand.”

“You must n’t come that, John,” interposed the

wag. "Was n't you up at the police-office in Sydney, last time you was down the country, about a lady's pocket-handkerchief?"

"Ay," added another; "and a little girl's bread and butter, as she was going to school?"

"I tell you, my man, I never take anything in my life from any other man but that bird; and I 'ood not stand to see any man rob another man."

"Do you mean to say," inquired a third, "that if you saw me coming out of the captain's stores with a piece of beef or a bottle of grog, you'd split?"

"I 'ood make you put it down; or else I 'ood call the captain."

"What! if I was to give you half?"

"I 'ood not have it."

At this identical juncture, a voice was heard at the door, where the figure of Biddy appeared.

"Is Shaun Thomas here? The masther wants you, Shaun."

"Faith, an' he is," answered one.

"Come in, Biddy!" cried another.

"Ay, come in, Biddy," added the wag; "John wants you."

"Here, Biddy! Biddy!" shouted half a dozen

voices at once; "come in, come in! John Thomas wants you. He says you 're to come in."

Biddy looked; but, as John did not exactly appear to be either saying or meaning anything of the sort, she merely uttered the regulation "Anamondyoul!" and "Come, Shaun, make haste; it's something about the beef," and hastened away.

The Welshman lingered a few seconds, to avoid provoking a fresh burst of raillery by walking up side by side with Biddy; and then, with an indignant valediction in his own tongue, sufficiently intelligible by the tone in which it was uttered, obeyed the summons.

"The Welshman nobs it up well," said one. "The mistress talks and laughs with him as she does n't with anybody else."

"And he's a regular favourite with Miss Marianna," said another. "He carries all her letters over to the township to that young Jewess she's so fond of."

"Do you think it's to the Jewess she sends all them letters?" ejaculated a third. "I should think *not*. Take my word, most of 'em goes over to the other side of the green."

"What! to the Court-House?"

“Ay, to be sure ; to the new superintendent of police.”

“Oh, he’s got nothing but his salary ; not above two hundred a year, or three, at most. Do you think she’d have him?”

“He’s a fine, handsome young fellow, though ; but terrible sharp where he takes against a man.”

“Then that’s just what Miss Marianna would be, if she had the power,” said another. “I know she’s a regular sharp one.”

“Well,” said the considerate man, “it’s just right, then, that she should get into the hands of a police magistrate : if she turns out too jolly, he can clap her into the cells for a night. Gammon that lock-up, is n’t cold of a winter night : just the place for a little lady like her, when she gets too obsecrophulous.”

“Here’s the Welshman coming down,” exclaimed one who had just looked out, as he hastily turned in again, “with pretty near half a bullock on his shoulder !”

All hands hastened out to look. “Where did you get that, Taffy?”—“Whose is that, Welshman?” was heard again and again, before the bearer of this valuable contribution to the hut’s stores was able to give a reply.

"The captain give us that for our dinner," he replied, at last, as several assisted to take the immense piece of meat off his shoulder, and place it on a sheet of bark in the middle of the floor.

"Well," said the considerate man, after a deliberate inspection of the beef; "there must be very nigh a hundredweight of meat there: boggins for a whole week: a very pretty present, lads. We must drink the governor's health first, after dinner."

"I'll lay any money," said another, "Miss Katharine got it for us."

"Why not Miss Marianna?" sharply inquired another; for Katharine was by no means in entire possession of the popular suffrages. "I'm sure Miss Marianna's as good as Miss Katharine."

"They'll both do," said the considerate man, now getting into better humour every minute; "only you see Miss Katharine likes to go walking up the hill with her book, and Miss Marianna is fonder of a little life and fun. But they'll both do: I've seen worse."

John Thomas could only say that Miss Katharine, as storekeeper, had delivered it to him on the captain's message, and Miss Bracton had come in and given him a "regular stifler" of rum



to help him to carry it down. The meat was speedily divided into portions, some to be kept, others to be roasted; and thus all the viands were in progress of preparation for the Christmas dinner.

Meantime, Morgan Brown added himself to the company. It was a day that could not be got over without a bout at the keg; but he did not happen to be "flush" enough with money to go to the township; and he knew he could knock up nothing like a drinking match with Martin, who abhorred rum and rum-drinkers in his heart; only employing the one or tolerating the other to serve his grand purpose of money-getting. Morgan, now in Beck's hands, never got more at his visits than a couple of glasses, just to keep him in tune; the big hut, as it was called, was consequently the only port for him.

There was, moreover, to be another participant in the good cheer of the day—one, however, of a very different stamp. Marianna had never been able to persuade Rachael to gratify her by getting into the little green cart and paying her a visit. Rachael's reluctance arose partly from the assigned reason, that she did not like to leave her father alone; and partly (which, though she did not even hint, her friend divined) that she did not feel

quite certain of the propriety of paying the visit. Rachael's education had been not at all inferior to Miss Bracton's; and the property to which she would be sole heiress was at least equal to that which Lieutenant Bracton possessed for division amongst his whole family : but she was shrinkingly sensible of the contempt with which the world regards her race.

Beside this she had contracted a timidity and distaste for society which operated in the same direction. The scorn of the Gentile on the one side, and the persecutions of the Jew on the other, had smitten upon her heart till her spirit was bowed down within her, and its attitude that of one who goes mourning from day to day. Well, indeed, she had loved her father : but could the vehement thoughts of girlhood be told to hoary age? Could the child appeal to the parent for the love that worships, and, evoking worship in return, consummates itself in a contention which shall be the least in the presence of the other? It could not be so ; and Rachael had grown up without this trait thus given to character ; only that her earnest soul, in its unquenchable aspiration for perfection, had still aimed at it through the ideal. She had loved the beautiful and holy images of her imagi-

nation; and, could they have lived, would have gone down upon her knees before them: but she knew not that there existed the impersonations of her ideal in the living humanity around her. None had ever lifted up the veil from their hearts and shown her that they too were just such as she was—that her very counterpart was passing her every hour, concealed only by the flimsy veil of circumstance and form. And hence the frank and strenuous truthfulness of Marianna made her seem like some long lost friend restored. Thus not till after some considerable period of intercourse with Marianna, and gradual acquaintance with the family at large, did Rachael begin to feel at all at ease away from her own home.

But the self-dependence which her isolation had compelled the young Jewess to learn, was only defensive, not offensive: it was tempered with a meekness and a shrinking back upon herself, that in a maiden of a race of less stamen, would have presently become morbid.

Marianna, too, had become in some measure isolated by her enthusiastic temperament; whilst everything had tended to prompt her to assert herself, and to bear herself hopefully, joyfully, and fearlessly. The meeting together of these two

natures was one of the appointed coincidences in the stupendous system of mental development. Neither character could have reached its decreed perfection without contact with the other. Minds thus brought into sympathy, to impart each to the other an opposite property, cling as inseparably together as if their law were the simple magnetic one. Marianna and Katharine had not clung together thus. Katharine's character had moved on from her very birth in due proportion of all its parts: her growth was the mere development of a perfect and unerring womanhood. She had no excess of the sad, like Rachael; no extreme of the buoyant, like Marianna; but stood perfect in what they were both aiming at—Marianna, from the one extreme, Rachael from the other—realizing their aspirations in her actual condition.

Thus the love of Marianna and Rachael for each other grew more profound from day to day. As each became better known to the other, each found in the other more of that she needed herself. Rachael often lovingly laughed at the unhesitating confidence of Marianna; Marianna as often lovingly lamented the timidity of Rachael. Of these troubles of Marianna's, the most vexatious of all was her friend's impracticability in the point of

the visit; and it was especially so in the present instance. She had quite promised herself that she should succeed on Christmas-day. But no!

"Dear Miss Bracton," said Rachael, "how can I leave my father alone to go to the great feast of your people? My father is a Jew. I love your Prophet, and I sometimes think he loves him too; but he has never named his name aloud. I saw my dear father shut his eyes and compress his lips, like one who groans in spirit over an evil deed, when I exclaimed, 'Alas! that our unhappy nation should have crucified the Good One!' and he shook his head—but that is all."

Thus, in addition to her regret at Rachael's over-sensitive fear of intruding upon Mr. and Mrs. Bracton, and of compromising herself, Marianna had the further vexation of a long-cherished project proving unsuccessful. She, therefore, determined at once to avenge herself lovingly by sending over to Rachael a portion of the day's viands: having ascertained that nothing unusual would be provided for the day at the store, and having appealed to Katharine for "the nicest little plum-pudding that could be made—a little beauty," she arranged for John Thomas to mount and be at Ghiagong with it before it had time to cool.

How the dinner hour passed at the big hut may be easily imagined by the reader, from the details already given of the preparations. The scene before described of the rum-drinking at Morgan Brown's own hut will convey a sufficiently accurate notion of what followed the dinner when the customary "bottle of rum a man" for the harvest home, and another "half-bottle a man" for the Christmas dinner, came down to the hut. In the parent country such an "allowance" appears culpable on the part of the master. Much of qualification, though no sufficient excuse of the evil practice, presents itself in the invariable custom and the climate of the locality. A much larger quantity of spirits may, undoubtedly, be used in a warm country than in a cold one without excess; as much larger doses of some drugs may, and indeed must, be taken to produce due effect. The bad custom, also, is a most tyrannical one; established in the earlier days of the Australian colonies, when no strong opinions in favour of teetotalism and temperance existed generally, it requires the most resolute principle now to denude it of authority; and the master who has not declared his determination to oppose the practice, is considered to have given a tacit consent to it. Such,

at this time, Lieutenant Bracton found to be his position ; and his niece, sharing in his regret, delivered the rum from the stores with a burdened conscience and a trembling hand.

Toast after toast went round, as time after time the panikin was replenished. There were none affecting the events of our tale for some time ; but at length one of the hands whom Martin Beck had hired in Sydney, and who, consequently, had been all along a sort of partisan of his, proposed " Good luck to the overseer." Martin Beck was generally liked. Though a laborious man himself, he was by no means a hard task-master to others, except when he had some peculiar motive ; and, more than all, he never promoted discipline by an appeal to the Courts. If he had to drive a lazy man, it was always by some cutting sarcasm, or by drawing down upon him derision and other annoyances from his hut-mates ; and so when he indulged a temporary spite against an individual. Until now, even his grudge against the Welshman had never sought any further gratification than that arising from perplexing him with difficult tasks, and irritating him by contemptuous treatment. Still, this was merely the consequence of having always had to associate with those amongst whom

“Court-work” was in ill favour. Naturally, he had none of that generosity which refuses to be beholden for revenge to an advantage not possessed by his enemy.

Meantime, the Welshman had just previously been irritated, through being joked about Biddy by the mischievous fellow already described.

“Here’s luck to John Thomas, our bullock-driver, and Mrs. Thomas, lady’s maid to the cows,” toasted the wag in a pause of the revelry, in a tone of such seemingly sincere urbanity, that it was as impossible for the Welshman to resent it, as it was for the rest of the hearers to refrain from a deafening peal of merriment. But under the excitement of the liquor, and chafed by the joke upon himself, the further submission of drinking the overseer’s health was out of the question: he could not take fire at the jest, without making things worse; but as to the overseer, by universal custom of the country he might say what he pleased: nay in speaking bluntly he knew he should be backed by several, and at least protected by the majority.

“I ’ood not drink her health if she was gasping, and it ’ood save her life,” blurted out John Thomas. “I know her better as she know herself: she was not always come to your hut,



countryman, for nothing," he added, addressing Morgan, who was from the extreme west of England, bordering on Wales.

There was so little in this ebullition different from what was often said about overseers, or other parties, by such as happened to bear them a grudge, that none except Morgan Brown took notice of it; but on him it told more weightily than even the Welshman himself was aware that it could: he looked all ways at once, and then fell entirely out of the conversation. Watching his opportunity, and staying only long enough to satisfy himself that nothing more was likely to be added, he quietly stole away to Martin's hut; where he found the black stretched on his berth, for once enjoying the holiday. On entering the black's hut a step or two, he stood still a moment, then going to the fire he took out his pipe, and deliberately filled it, without saying a word; stooping down and poking about the wood-ashes till he found a live coal that exactly suited him, he lit the pipe, and slowly raising himself went on smoking.

"You seem in a study, old man," said Beck. Morgan Brown was a middle-aged man.

"So would you be, if you'd heard what I have."

“What’s up?” eagerly asked the black, hastily raising himself upon his elbow; for he now understood the meaning of Brown’s manner.

“*The Welshman wouldn’t drink your health, if it would save your life. He knows you as well as you know yourself. You don’t come to my hut for nothing. Didn’t I tell you so all along? I’ve known John Thomas longer than you have. This is what your giving him such lots of young bullocks to break in comes to: if you’d stuck to the old workers he’d never have needed to go five miles from home for ’em, instead of prowling all about for a dozen miles beyond my hut.*”

“Did he say what you said, and no nonsense?” inquired the black.

“Why, of course he did, man; or else I shouldn’t have come and told you.”

“I’ll stop his gallop,” said the black, altogether losing his stammer in the force of repressed passion. “Just you run over to the gully there (the second in the range), t’other side the creek—in your mountain, I mean—and drive my horse up, while I get on my togs. Don’t bring him here: run him a little way along the road to the township,—I’ll bring the saddle and bridle.”

“Oh! you’re going to do it murry-make-haste,

then?” said Brown, brightening up. “What are you going at?”

“Never you mind — I’ll have that fellow’s ticket before he’s a day older.”

“Eh, eh?”

“He’ll never come out of that township now he’s got a drop in, without going down to the public-house; and as sure as he goes there he’s nippered.”

“But he’s not there yet.”

“Never mind, man; you get my horse up. He’s going over there directly, with some cake, or pudding, or something for the Jew’s daughter. My word! he’d better keep it for himself, for he’ll be hungry before he comes back here again.”

“Well?”

“There, fetch the horse, and be smart. If *I*’m to do it, leave me alone to do it: if *you* can do it, go and do it.”

Morgan, yielding to the superior quickness and energy of the black, hastened off without further explanation. “It’s a good job,” said Beck, as he hastened to get out his best jacket and waistcoat, “that I *planted* my horse and told them I could n’t find him. Pshaw! and that fool would have stood

parley-vouing here till the chance was lost." In about twenty minutes he was spurring at full speed for Ghiagong.

Checking his horse, to let him blow and get rid of the marks of hard galloping, as he neared the township, the black rode along within cover of the bush, so as not to be liable to be discerned from the store, to the corner nearest to the public-house; and there dismounting, unbuckled his horse's bridle, and passing it round a small tree, rebuckled it to the bit. Descending the bank of the river, at a point where as yet it had not reached the open plain, he made his way along it on foot, till he brought the public-house (which was but a few paces from the bank) between him and the store, so as still to conceal himself from the sight of any one on Mr. Moses's premises. Rising on to the bank, he then proceeded into the public-house, hoping to find the man he was seeking; but he was not there.

"He's somewhere about the Court-House," said Peter Burnes, the landlord; "shall I send for him?"

"Do," said the black; "say *you* want him. I want to give him half a pint."

The individual sent for was a man known as

Harry Grimsby, who had served a seven years' sentence, and was now some four years free. Too indolent to work, and too fond of a debauched life to occupy himself as a hutkeeper, or in any of the other easy employments of the bush; Grimsby, after getting over the principal part of his servitude as a farm constable—and some said a portion of it as a scourger at a distant police station—had, ever since he became free, held the situation of a constable at one or other of the townships. This office, in Australia, is at once the most despised and the most lucrative; the salary is ample, because the odium is great, and other occupations are plentiful; then there are rewards for taking bushrangers, and the proceeds of informations constantly liable to be laid, besides numerous other large and ready gains; and, finally, there is the fullest opportunity of fleecing the intemperate working class, when intoxicated men in possession of considerable amounts of wages are met with.

Harry Grimsby was amongst the most active and unscrupulous of these extortioners. He was some forty-five years of age, but in appearance considerably older; of good height, bony and broad shouldered: but the most striking pecu-

liarities of his physiognomy were the loss of an eye, and a sort of abstractedness, and ready-for-anything grin, that sat perpetually on his hard, colourless countenance.

The messenger found him, where Martin might have seen him if he had looked, standing with his back against the side wall of the Court-House, in the shade, his long staff pitched upon the toe of his uncleaned boot, and his hand resting on the top end of it. On receiving the message, he hurried across to the public-house, his faculties in that state of delirious vigour which the habitual sot attains at a certain point of his daily series of stimulants.

Taking him into an unoccupied room, the black proceeded to open his business. "I've got a troublesome customer on our farm, Grimsby! You know him well: that Taffy that drives our bullocks. He thinks he's a match for any three men about!"

"I know him," said the constable. "He's double jointed, they say—as strong as a little horse. What weights I've seen him lift!"

"You're frightened of him?" rejoined the black; putting what he meant for a taunting assertion into the form of a query.

The constable made no verbal reply, but, grinning till all his teeth were visible, put his hand into the pocket of his fustian shooting-jacket, and bringing the butt end of a horse-pistol into sight, exhibited it humorously, and then carefully put it out of sight again.

“ Well! you know he’s a ticket-of-leave man.”

“ I know,” echoed the constable.

“ It would just do him good to let him have six months in government. He’d be glad to be civil when he got his ticket again.”

“ And not a hard job neither, with our cove,” said the constable. “ He’ll take a man’s ticket for looking on the wrong side of the way,” and he chuckled maliciously.

“ Will you have a glass?”

“ I don’t care if I do.”

“ Well, you can get it after I go: I’m in a hurry. I’ll give you the brads. This Welshman, you know, I can’t get along with him at all. He’ll be in the township directly, and he’s sure to come down here. Can’t you give him a night over the way? He’s half seas over now, and as good as the bank to come down here; and a ticket-of-leave man, you know, has no business to be drinking at a public-house.”

“What are you going to stand?”

“Oh, giving you this trouble, you know, something tol-lol. Here, I’ll tell you what I’ll do; a caser (dollar) if you give him a night of it; and four if he gets what’ll make him quiet.”

“Bargain,” said the constable.

“Don’t be jerran (afraid) man. Only you chaff him, and you’ll have his monkey up in a minute; and then if he hits out, you know it’s assaulting the police.”

“Oh, never you fear: I know all about that.”

“Here’s a caser; the rest is to come. You know I’m a man of my word.”

“Never heard but what you was,” said the constable.

The pair parted: Grimsby betaking himself to his look-out for the poor Welshman, and the Black to make the best of his way back. As he cantered smartly up toward the hill point, where it drew near the creek, he saw Mr. Hurley riding steadily towards the house at a short distance before him, apparently dressed for dinner. He allowed Mr. Hurley to get out of sight; and then rode easily up to the door of his own hut, and deliberately took the saddle and bridle off his horse, without any affectation of concealment.



He knew that by this time the Welshman must be nearly at the township ; and, as he had taken care not to be seen starting himself, he could easily say he had found his own horse and ridden out, after the Welshman had been despatched on the master's.

## CHAPTER X.

The Constable's Charge.—The Welshman in a Scrape.—  
Biddy doing Battle.—Marianna's Plea.—Mr. Hurley and  
the Ladies.—The Welshman released.

DURING the succeeding night, Harry Grimsby awakened from the comatose sleep of the dram-drinker, to the delirious consciousness that follows it; the phrensied and tremulous excitement of caution was upon him:—remorse he never felt. “Harry Grimsby — Harry Grimsby,” he said apostrophizing himself, “thou’st put thy foot into it. The man in the lock-up is a fancy man with that youngest lass at the Rocky Springs; and woe be to the man that gets in the way of John Hurley. Thou must put this to rights, lad, as soon as John is up.” And with that he dozed off again.

At about half-past five in the morning after Christmas-day, Mr. Hurley was out walking to and fro in front of the Court-House. The night had been excessively sultry: on such nights the rest of many people is disturbed; and already

several men were beginning to stir in and out of the few buildings.

Presently the debauched and repulsive face of Grimsby, who was sneaking round the corner of the Court-House to listen at Mr. Hurley's chamber window, and ascertain if he was at home, met him suddenly as he walked to that end of the front.

"Hallo, Grimsby! Where have you come from? Not abed last night?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I have been to bed; only I thought as I'd come and see if you was up, to tell you, sir, as there's a man in the cells."

"Well! What then?"

"Why, sir; seein' as how it's a man belongin' to the Rocky Springs, I thought you'd like to know."

"Hem! very good of you, I'm sure. Pray, what's the charge?"

"Why, sir, he was drunk, and—and—drunk, sir."

"'Drunk.'—'Drunk, and'—'and' What, sir? I know you, sir, of old. There's some needle-pointing going on in this affair on your own side."

"Well, sir, he was assaulting the police: but I don't want to press that part of the charge. The

lock-up keeper's got it agin' him; but knowin', sir, as how Captain Bracton's a friend of yours, I'm willin' to let that part drop."

"Oh! then *you* were the police yourself? Was it I, or Mr. Bracton, that informed you that this compliment would be acceptable? What did the assault consist in? You police, you know, have very peculiar notions about assaults."

"Why, sir; he struck me."

"Where?"

"The chin, sir."

"I see no mark?"

"No, sir; it was underneath."

"Well, but that would be your neck?"

"He hit up'ards, sir."

"Oh! As how, pray?"

"So, sir," said the constable, doubling his fist and striking it as John Thomas had done, but remarkably tenderly, against his own chin.

"Well! that was a woful assault certainly. Were you drinking then?"

"I—I—"

"Hold up your chin. Why, there's no mark. Oh, yes, I see a little discoloration. Or is it dirt? You can neither have washed nor shaved yourself for this three days past. You certainly

are a dirty dog, Grimsby, both in person and character. Now, mind, if you don't look to it, that your dress and person are kept in such a state as your salary has been intentionally calculated to enable you to do ; I'll look to it that you receive that salary very little longer. You know how much I have put up with you already, from the mere circumstance of accidentally knowing some little about your child at home ; whom you left, by your debaucheries, an outcast without a roof to protect her from the rain—*or worse*. After what I have signified to you, I wonder your conscience ever allows you to sleep. How much have you now got chalked up against you down at the public-house ?”

“ I don't know, sir.”

“ But at all events, I'll put a stop to it for you so far as I can. Go over and tell Mr. Peter Burke, I want to speak to him for half a minute.”

Grimsby had not stated that it was the Welshman who was in the lock-up ; and it never occurred to Mr. Hurley to inquire whether the man was one of the important hands on a farm. When, therefore, he now went in and wrote a note to Lieutenant Bracton, to apprise him where he would find one of his men, he did so under

the impression of its being one of the ordinary labourers; and without any expression of regret for the inconvenience attending the loss of a bullock-driver at such a busy season, or any offer to expedite the trial of the offender by (if consonant with the due administration of the law) his return to his work.

On going out with the note, Grimsby and the publican were just approaching. "Mr. Burke," said Mr. Hurley, "I don't exactly choose to inquire how much this man is in your debt. However, I'll tell you this—he was half drunk all day yesterday. I saw him going in to get his 'morning,' as I came back from bathing before breakfast; I saw him down at your house again three hours afterwards, when I was up on the hill on the other side of the river with my glass; I saw him going over to your house, when I was riding out of the township in the afternoon; and I met him so drunk that he did not even know me, and almost tumbled under my horse's feet, when I came back late at night. Now, observe, what I tell you: there is nowhere but at your house, that he can get liquor to keep it up in this way. He can't *buy* single drams at the store, and I'll take care that Miss Moses *gives* him no more.

His conduct is such, that I can break him any day I choose; and *if* I have to break him, through your trusting him, I'll make you suffer for it: I'll break him on the day he receives his salary, and then he'll run away with it and never pay you a farthing; and I'll certify that your house is a pest to the township, and yourself utterly unfit to have a license. I have no doubt your principal reason for trusting him is, that you are afraid of his looking too sharp after you and the company in your house. But if he is only to take into custody such disorderly persons as *you* think fit, he is *your* constable, instead of an officer of this Court. Grimsby, take this note over to the settler's at the Rocky Springs."

"Humph!" said Mr. Peter Burke and the constable to each other, eyeing the address, after the young gentleman had gone in. "This Miss Bracton (for so the note happened to be addressed), then, is the settler at the Rocky Springs."

About three hours after this time, just as the family at Diandullah Mountain were about to disperse from the breakfast-table, "One-eyed Grimsby," as he was usually denominated in the township and its neighbourhood, presented himself at the door of Martin Beck's hut, covered with per-

spiration, and bearing all the other marks of a sharp journey on foot through the bush. Martin was already aware of what had taken place ; Morgan Brown having ridden across to Ghiagong, in the evening of the preceding day, to ascertain.

“ Well, Grimsby,” said the overseer, “ *what’s o’clock ?*”

“ He’s nippered, safe enough,” replied Grimsby ; “ but it’s like to be an awkward job. I can see the young fellow’s precious savage about it.”

“ What did he say ?”

“ Oh, not a word,” replied Grimsby. “ He’s too good a judge to *say* anything. But I shall have to look out for myself for this three months to come, before I shall get it out of his head. Wish you’d take this letter up to your cove.”

“ From Mr. Hurley ?”

“ Yes.”

“ To Captain Bracton ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, take it to Captain Bracton, then ; don’t bring it to me. Have you had your breakfast ? But stop ; you’ll like a whet first, after yesterday.”

So saying, Martin, who was just going out when Grimsby arrived, turned round, and unlocking his chest, drew out a square half-gallon bottle, and



filled out nearly half a panikin of rum, for the poor trembling victim of his own intemperance and Beck's cunning.

"There, drink that, man, and then make yourself some breakfast. I can't stop. Hoy, Dunny Jack!" he shouted, addressing John Thomas's mate, who was standing at the big hut door, wondering when, or whether at all, his principal would come to light,—“fetch up all the bullocks you can find nigh hand: here's a constable from the township to say your mate's got into a scrape. I must have in just one load of flooring boards for the new cottage; and then you can do what you like for the day.”

“But how'll you do without the bullock-driver?” inquired Grimsby.

“Oh, man,” replied the black, “I've spare-chained a seventy-foot girder out of a brush, with a team of twelve bullocks, before now: it's odd if I can't manage half a dozen in the open forest.”

Martin went out, leaving the constable to help himself; but Grimsby was too much terrified by his position, and the reprimand he had already received, to do so. Hastily making a couple of gulps of the liquor, he put on his hat again, and

moved towards the house. At the men's hut-door, as he reached it, stood Biddy, who had heard the overseer's piece of information to Dunny Jack, and had stolen down to learn all she could about it.

"An' fhat have you got Shaun in the lock-up for?" asked Biddy. "The divil may take you to himself, that you couldn't let the poor boy come to the township—and the mistress sending him, too—but ye's must take his ticket from him. Arrah, bad luck to ye's, ye dirt!"

"Here," said Grimsby, as rudely as he dared, after surveying the mass of scowling faces that had fixed their eyes on him, over one another's shoulders from inside the hut, "take this letter up to the master. It's from Mr. Hurley."

"Troth, and ye 'll take it yerself," replied Biddy.

"Here, some of you lads take it," repeated Grimsby, appealing in an authoritative, but more civil tone, to the men; for he saw enough to make him in haste to be gone: he needed no telling that if he could be only got inside the hut, out of the master's sight and hearing, he would come out sorely contused.

"Don't none of ye's take it for him, boys,"

cried Biddy. "Let the spalpeen go wid it himself. Anamondyoul!"—addressing Grimsby,—"ye's didn't come here for anybody to help you to put Shaun in the lock-up."

But this was all the battle Biddy could do: the next minute she was to be found sobbing and wringing her hands behind the dairy door.

Grimsby, meantime, baffled in all his attempts to avoid going up to the hut where the family resided, and where they were now just about to rise from breakfast, resolutely faced the difficulty, and presented himself at the door.

"A letter, your honour," he said, lifting his hat as he encountered the firm, but by no means aggressive, eye of the master. The portly, well-aged gentleman sat between the hearth and the table, with the hand of his daughter on his shoulder. Katharine, who sat on the other side, rose and received the missive from Grimsby at the door, and seeing the direction of the letter, handed it to her cousin; she then walked round, and, leaning her hands on the shoulders, and her chin upon the head of Marianna, proceeded to gratify her curiosity as to the contents.

In an instant, Katharine drew herself suddenly up, with an expression of dismay and pain on her

countenance; while, at the same time, her cousin's face assumed a look of the utmost consternation and vexation. Without glancing her eye beyond the first sentence, Marianna recommenced and began to read aloud:—"Gliagong, Thursday morning. My dear Miss Bracton,—One of your papa's men is in the cells. As it is holiday time, he will probably be safer there than outside, till the court sits on Saturday—(How very unfeeling of Mr. Hurley!)—And now my very, very dear—dear—my"—and a long pause followed.

"Well, what else?" asked Lieutenant Bracton; not comprehending the "pet's" confusion. "Who does Mr. Hurley say it is?"

"Oh! the rest," replied Katharine, "is only their little small-talk between themselves, papa."

"Doesn't Mr. Hurley say who it is?"

"No! not a syllable. Turn over, sister; perhaps he mentions in a postscript. No, sir; not a syllable: but I fear it must be John Thomas."

"Can it be John Thomas?" asked Mrs. Bracton. "Call Biddy, my dear, and let her go to the men's hut and inquire."

Katharine hastened to do so, but had scarcely passed the threshold when Biddy presented herself, holding another note in one hand, and the

corner of her apron, with which she had been endeavouring to get her face to rights, in the other.

“Biddy!” exclaimed Katharine.

“Oh, Miss! they’ve got Shaun in the lock-up; and they say Mishther Hurley never forgives any body for bating the police. Bad luck to the old one-eyed divil! he never had a heart in the middle of his four bones like Shaun’s.”

“What! the constable that brought the letter just now?”

“Fait, Miss, an’ that’s himself. Mishther Moses’s man says it was him put him in for bating him.”

“This note, then, was brought by Mr. Moses’s man?”

Katharine now returned with the second note to Marianna. It was from Rachael; and its contents were simply these:—

“DEAREST,—You will have heard, before this reaches you, that our poor messenger is in trouble. What a pity I should have been the cause of the mischief! He hung the bridle of his horse on the hook at our door, when he went down to the public house: I’m sure he didn’t mean to stop

ten minutes. So when we saw him going across to the lock-up, my father made the man bring in the saddle and bridle, and hobble the horse and turn him over the river, where there is some good grass. Cannot something be done for him? I hear Mr. Hurley is very severe about assaults on the police; which is the charge. I mean, cannot something be done to get him released before court-day, which is not till Saturday? I have sent him some supper, and will send him something from our own table every meal time. Come over. In haste, your own

RACHAEL."

"Papa, he shall not be flogged!" exclaimed Marianna, turning to her father, with an energy which would have startled a stranger, and then falling on his neck in a passion of tears.

"My dear," urged her father, "I am not 'in command' in the business; but I believe, as he is a ticket-of-leave man, the utmost will be the loss of that, and his return to Government."

"Well, that's almost as bad," sobbed Marianna. "Do, do papa, try and stay them from taking his ticket: he is to be married to Biddy, you know, by-and-bye."

“ But, my dear Nanny, I tell you I have no authority myself in the case ; and I think Mr Hurley would very justly consider my interference with his decisions highly improper.”

“ I will never believe,” exclaimed Marianna, “ that he has been guilty of anything seriously criminal.”

“ Mr. Moses’s man,” interposed Katharine, “ told Biddy that it was an assault on that old constable who brought Mr. Hurley’s note ; and he did n’t seem much hurt.”

“ Well, papa,” pleaded Marianna, “ then you’ll drive me over to the store, won’t you ? You have never seen Miss Moses yet, and I want you to see her. I know you’ll be in love with her ; she is such a sweet girl !”

“ Oh, no, no ! that would never do ; if only on your mama’s account : besides, I should break the little cart down. But I suppose you and Katharine had better take one of the men, and go over and see what it exactly is. The offence cannot be anything very serious, or Mr. Hurley would have specified it himself : besides, I should wish Mr. Moses to be told that whatever he thinks the man needs, he can send over to the gaol for him, till the trial. It certainly would be very

vexatious to lose that man ! I think I will ride over myself."

" Well, we shall go too, sister. Papa, when you order your horse, will you tell them to get the cart ready ? But *you can't* go—it's your horse that's over at the township."

In rather more than another hour afterwards, the two young ladies entered the little parlour of the store at Ghiagong, along with their friend Rachael, who had lent her hand to help them to jump down from the cart.

" What is to be done ?" exclaimed Marianna.

She and Rachael clasped each other's hands, and looked in each other's faces ; with singularly different expression however : that on Marianna's face was pure anxiety,—that on Rachael's largely partaking of contentment.

" Oh !" said Rachael, " it will be all very well now. I am so glad you are come ! If he had lost his ticket, I should never have forgotten it."

" But how, Rachael?—how do you mean ? What can I do ?"

" You must ask Mr. Hurley, dear, and he'll let him off."

" Oh, dear ! no, Rachael ; I could not do that."



"She could not do that, Miss Moses," echoed Katharine.

"Why not?" was the innocent inquiry of Rachael. "Oh, you think it improper. Well, how foolish!"

"Indeed, it would be improper," persisted Katharine.

"That is very strange," murmured Rachael, perplexed.

"But even if I should," pleaded Marianna—"but no, Rachael, I will not."

"Mr. Bracton, says," added Katharine, "that he could not himself; plainly, then, my sister could not."

"Why?" urged Rachael—"why could not your father ask Mr. Hurley to look over it?"

"Because papa feels that making such a request would be almost the same thing as attempting to influence Mr. Hurley in the exercise of his office: besides, Mr. Hurley may really consider the offence one that ought not to be looked over."

"Neither, Katharine, neither. It will be all well, if Marianna will only make the request. See! here is Mr. Hurley coming over," she exclaimed, pointing through the window. "I'll ask him myself, now you are here to say Mr. Bracton wishes

it. Nothing is more common, you know, than for settlers to request a magistrate to forgive a man, who is a good man generally, a single fault ; and this, everybody says, is hardly a fault at all. I shall ask in your papa's name."

Mr. Hurley's voice was now heard without, calling, " Miss Rachael, Miss Rachael !"

" Open the door and come in, sir," answered Rachael ; with a little finesse, thinking to throw Mr. Hurley off his guard, by surprise at seeing her visitors unexpectedly, and so prefer her request.

" I have a favour to beg, Miss Rachael," commenced Mr. Hurley, as he opened the door, well knowing by the cart outside who was within. " Marianna ! Katharine ! shopping ?—or something about this man ?"

" Yes, Mr. Hurley," said Rachael, " and a favour too for him, if you want one from me."

" Pray what is it, ladies ? I can tell you this, that his assault on the police is only a piece of humbug."

" I knew it," exclaimed Marianna : " I told papa, did I not, Katharine, that he would never be guilty of any real crime ? and I was sure that Mr. Hurley would know so too."

"You do me too much honour on that point, Miss Bracton," said Mr. Hurley, rather seriously; "I have not yet examined him; all I know is from the paltry story of his accuser. But what is this favour, Miss Moses, and what is the condition of your acceding to the request I have to make? Or, perhaps, I had better make the first statement. You often give the constable, Grimsby, a glass of rum; I know it is out of kindness to a man whom no one associates with—but, I assure you, it has the reverse of a benevolent effect:—he then wants more, and goes down to Burne's, and gets rid of the friend he might keep in his pocket. Don't give him any more, there's a good young lady. Will you oblige me?"

"Most willingly, Mr. Hurley; and now more so than ever: for I am afraid it is only too likely that my giving him a double glass, as it was Christmas-day, and he rode over so hard to bring me dear Miss Bracton's seasonable present, was the means of getting the man into this scrape."

"Why, who is it, Marianna?" asked Mr Hurley; "surely not your bullock-driver?"

"Yes," replied all the young ladies at once. "Did you not know it?"

"No: but I thought that scoundrel Grimsby

must have some more than ordinary motive. He came to me at six o'clock this morning, and offered not to press the charge of assault, because your papa was a friend of mine. Ha! ha! a clean bowl out! I see it all: he thought he'd gone too far,—and no marks to show. Well, as for the assault—but I must enforce respect for the police, in the midst of such a population, or we should presently want three times as many constables to keep the peace. Your papa wants him on the farm, Miss Bracton?"

"Yes."

"The man who looks after the Court-House is away, and he has the keys; otherwise I would have him up at once. I can see you would like to know the worst before you go."

"Yes: if you would be so kind."

"Then, again, Grimsby has not got back."

"There is the corporal of the mounted police, Mr. Hurley, standing on the green," observed Rachael; "he can tell you all about it. Shall I call him to the door?"

"I'll call him myself, Miss Moses," replied Mr. Hurley; and, leaving the young ladies in the parlour, he went to the door for that purpose. The corporal repeated what he had already said

to Rachael ; adding that the Welshman was not even to be called really intoxicated. " Well," said Mr. Hurley, " Grimsby says he makes no charge of assault, and you say there was no ground for the charge of intoxication ; and I know personally that Grimsby was intoxicated himself. It would be very unjust to confine the man till court-day, under such circumstances. Go and fetch him over."

Mr. Hurley stood at the store door, till the culprit arrived. He came, all the paler for his night's confinement, and looking in every direction save at the magistrate ; but evidently as unsubdued as if nothing had happened.

" Repeat what you have to say, in the man's presence," said the magistrate, addressing the corporal.

" Well, sir, this man was certainly a little the worse for liquor. I was in at Peter Burne's, it being Christmas-day, having half a pint of rum after dinner, when Grimsby the constable went and sat down by this man, and tried to force his conversation upon him : but the man didn't seem to want to have anything to say to him. At last Grimsby took the jug of water, and, instead of pouring it into his own glass, nearly

filled this man's up; pretending it was a mistake."

"Well: how about the assault?"

"I think the prisoner asked him if he did that on purpose, for I could not quite hear; and I heard Grimsby say, 'as you like it.' Then the prisoner gave him a chuck with his fist under the chin."

"Was that all?"

"Yes, your worship; but when Grimsby got up, and pulled out his pistol, and collared him, and the man tried to take the pistol away from him——"

"No," interrupted the Welshman, "I never want the pistol at all; but she was very near blow my brains out, she was so drunk. She hold the pistol in my face, and her finger was hold the trigger."

"At last," continued the corporal, "when the man began to get the best of him, he called on me, in the Queen's name, to help him; and I didn't dare to refuse. So then the man gave in, and we took him over to the lock-up."

"You hear, Thomas," said Mr. Hurley, "what the corporal says: he partly exculpates and partly inculpates you. But, as the charge of assault

resolves itself into one of a very different character from those which I have determined to deal severely with, I may look over *for once*, as it was Christmas-day, your offence as a ticket-of-leave man in being in liquor. You may go, corporal,—he is discharged. And now let me caution you not to forget how easily you can get rid of your ticket of exemption from Government service. Ay! that's Miss Bracton. She has had the trouble of coming all the way over to Ghiagong, this morning, to look after you. You owe your release, I can tell you, to her. Take care you requite her by your future good conduct."

"Yes," said the Welshman, very seriously, "I am always very fond to Miss Mary."

Mr. Hurley walked away to the corner of the store, partly to conceal a smile from the culprit, and partly to allow him an opportunity of paying his fee of thanks to the gentle solicitors who had been practising in his behalf.

That night the Welshman was welcomed safe back amongst his messmates, little dreaming, however, how his scrape was brought about, and to whom he owed it; whilst Martin Beck sat in his hut alone, grinding his teeth with vexation.

## CHAPTER XI.

Harvest at Broken Bay. — Willoughby's "Clearers." — Naming the Sloop.—"The Daisy of the Bay."—Mary Kable and her new friends.

OUR narrative now transfers itself to Brisbane Water, as nothing of an overt kind affecting the welfare of the new settlers took place at the Rocky Springs for some months. Martin Beck and Morgan Brown were indeed covertly watching the Welshman's movements, and planning various schemes for getting rid of him from that part of the country; but, in the mean time, whilst they supposed themselves in imminent danger from his seeing on Coolarama-creek run the young cattle they had branded for themselves out of Lieutenant Bracton's herd, he still continued to suppose them only beasts branded in the names of Mrs. Bracton and her daughter. In ceaseless terror of the Welshman, their malice toward him became bitter, concentrated, and unscrupulous: Morgan, on every fresh occasion when he met



with him became more and more ruffianly and abusive ; while Martin's malignity took the form of vigilance and silent determination. Something to John Thomas's surprise and perplexity, the overseer left off "drilling" him on the farm ;—left him almost to himself ; and even appeared on occasions almost friendly.

Meantime, Broken Bay also had had its season of gathering in the harvest. The fine lake-like arm of Brisbane Water displayed all round upon its sweep of shores an abundant crop : the maize waved to and fro in the sea-breeze, its elegant tassels depending from stalks of ten feet high, forming arched avenues betwixt the rows, down which the farm residents might stray in the heat of noon quite shielded from the sun. The wheat also turned out its crop of sixty-three and sixty-five pounds to the bushel. Cheered by the bountiful produce of the season, the young Australian might be seen leading his reapers, with the heaviest sickle and the longest strides, often till the moon was radiant in the still sky of midnight. The old settlers never employ so many hands as new ; and, unless in the case of such as make a point of maintaining a show of superior rank, the members of their own families are often

the quickest and most untiring reapers in the field.

More than once before the wheat was off the ground, and often whilst the maize was plucking, Willoughby, as he was steering over to his anchorage after tacking, could perceive, first the fluttering ribbons of another bonnet beside the old bushman's daughter's, and then detect the stedfast gaze of its wearer across the water, and watch her departure in sudden haste toward the cottage. On the native's farm, too, the harvest-home and the Christmas-day had both been differently celebrated from what they had been at the Rocky Springs.

The owner was accustomed to his position, and settled into habits no longer under the tyranny of those he employed: his men were paid their money whenever they chose to ask for it, and it was then their own; they might do as they liked with it. But if they chose to spend it in drinking, it must be—*not on the farm*. The proprietor of the Rocky Springs, like all new settlers, had yet to establish his right thus to dictate, by a first year's experience of the exigency, and by a formally expressed decision. Reuben Kable's resolution on the point was so

well known, that no one thought of objecting to his carrying it out.

Willoughby's own section, likewise, which he had now obtained possession of, was exhibiting numerous tokens of the energetic superintendency of his friend. A little, wiry cockney, thief-bred, who had weathered all the severities of road-parties and iron-gangs, with a mate exactly correspondent to himself, from the Irish metropolis, —a first-rate combination for a falling-party,—having heard of the job somewhere in their wanderings, came across and took ten acres by the piece. They levelled it in a fortnight; and then, fancying the work and the master, and also the young mistress, they agreed for the burning-off.

When Willoughby came up by night, the fires on his own land were no bad beacon in making his anchorage: he could see them, several miles before he made his berth, smouldering along the bank; first dimly and smokily, then—as the burners-off woke up and came out of their tent-hut to put the logs together afresh after their surfaces had burnt back from each other—emitting with the jerk a shower of sparks up into the darkness; and when by contact they began to

burn actively again, sending up a steady ruddy blaze, chorusing all together into a deep roar which might be heard far upon the water. If the wind and tide were such that he happened to be expected, Larry and Ned were always on the look-out; and, if they could descry the shape of the well-known white sail slowly stealing along the dark face of the bay, were sure to be lying smoking on the bank, to board "our young cove, the skipper," for a glass of the real stuff: for such, and nothing but such, Willoughby had the reputation of giving ship-room to. It was, however, difficult often to tell by the light of the fires, which of the smut-masked faces was the Irish, and which the Englishman's.

On the other hand, Willoughby proved as welcome a coadjutor to Reuben Kable, in the nautical and commercial undertaking, as Reuben was an efficient superintendent of the first farm operations for him. The sailors soon discovered, by the bold runs made, that if they had not a more fearless skipper than Reuben was when he chose to sail the boat, they had a much more skilful one. Paid still by the trip, and now making on an average four trips where they were used formerly to make three, they were well

satisfied with the change ; and the trading, more steadily carried on by one who possessed a main interest in it, proved not at all less lucrative than Reuben Kable had predicted.

Indeed, all went prosperously. Only light mistakes were made sometimes in a matter of another sort ; Willoughby forgetting himself and addressing the young lady as " Polly," and Mary Kable omitting to make any formal distinction in addressing her brother and his friend, and calling the latter Willoughby.

At length, Willoughby, having become sufficiently acquainted with the channels of the various inlets and streams of Broken Bay to pronounce on the build of boat he would prefer for his future trading, it was resolved to purchase such an one, immediately an opportunity occurred. This took place toward the latter end of February, succeeding the Christmas the events of which at the Rocky Springs have been already described. Along with his own opinion, Willoughby, having fixed his eye upon a small neat sloop, not above a couple of years off the stocks, and built upon one of the branches of the Hawkesbury, wished to have the benefit of his father's more experienced judgment. To the appeal for his

advice, Lieutenant Bracton joyfully acceded, not a little gratified at the successful experiment of his son ; and, on reflection, far from insensible of the charms which such a life must have to him in the prime of his age, and habituated to salt water from his infancy.

The new boat, meantime, though built in a stream debouching into Broken Bay, had been hitherto a Five Islander, running down the coast on the other side of Port Jackson ; and had consequently borne a name connected with the southern trade. She was to be fresh painted ; and if purchased, it was determined to give her a fresh name : a matter, as all sea-going people know, of not less importance than the change of name to the fair sex. This became a subject of no little debate, whenever, during the month of February, the little party at Brisbane Water met for an evening all together : but chiefly it was matter of debate betwixt Willoughby Bracton and Mary Kable ; he insisting that the little sloop should be called after his friend's sister, and she contending that it should be called after his own.

“ You can't think how much better I shall sail her, Polly,” said Willoughby, after a very cogent

argument to the contrary, "as the *Mary Kable*, of Brisbane Water."

"Stuff, Willoughby!" exclaimed the young lady, trying hard to repress one of the most exquisite attempts ever made by a mouth to smile. "Reuben, I wish you 'd determine it. What do you say?"

"Nothing; he may call her what he likes. *The Ugly Always*, or *Mary Kable of Brisbane Water*; that's what I shall vote for."

"Very well, brother; I'm content. And I dare say Willoughby is; so we're all agreed. There's no need of saying any more about it."

"I should have all the hands fighting who'd be over the stern first with a scraper," said Willoughby, laughing. "And I doubt the painter would have to make night-work to get it there at all."

"Yes; I know Jack would n't let it be there for one; would he, Willoughby?" was Mary's appeal.

"I should n't like," replied he, "to tell Jack it was there by my orders."

At length Willoughby, on getting back from Sydney, informed his friends that his father would be there to meet him on his return; and that, as

it was now some months since his mother and sisters had seen him, and they, moreover, wanted several things from Sydney, which only themselves could select, the ladies also meant to accompany his father.

“And now, Daisy of Broken Bay!—there, there,—my head gets raps enough with the blocks.”

“Don’t you know, Willoughby, it’s very rude to call people nick-names?”

“Well; this is not what I want to talk about at all,” said Willoughby: “of course you *must* go and see my sisters, Mary; so we shall bring you back again in the sloop. And, as we are at a loss for a name, what so proper as to give her that of the first lady she carries?”

“Agreed,” replied Mary: “but if I should persuade one of your sisters, or both of them, to come back and stay a month with me, how then?”

“I rather think they won’t get leave,” replied Willoughby; “but, if such a thing should happen, we must lump you all into one collective title. Say the *Three Nereides*.”

“Nereides! I have seen the word, I know, in the heathen mythology: but I never could read that mythology: I quite hated it; it seems like a history of mad people.”



“ Well, darling,” said Reuben, “ we must take you with us this time, at all rates : we can talk about the name of the boat afterwards. I wish you to be acquainted with the Miss Bractons ; so get ready all you want in the course of to-morrow. There’s almost sure to be a wind at the change of the moon. Don’t you think there will ?”

“ Yes ; to-morrow night about this time, you ought to be ready to come aboard.”

Accordingly at the specified hour on the following evening, her heavy luggage already aboard in the captain’s care, Mary Kable, furred to the chin and shawled to the ankles, her little basket in her hand, tripped lightly down the dewy path, through the darkness, to the wharf ; and then, with a brother holding her hand before, and a brother’s friend taking care of her behind, she stepped along the narrow plank laid from the bank to the deck. The anchor was heaved ; and, in a few minutes, the old *Sarah* stood out into the bay, for the last time, from Reuben Kable’s wharf.

The party had a quick and pleasant voyage. Soon after daylight they ran up Sydney harbour, in company with the *Little Bee* ; and, the wind chopping round, made a long leg over to the north

shore of Cockle Bay ; then tacked and shot across to the Market Wharf, where they dropped anchor. Reuben Kable soon afterwards accompanied his friend and his sister to Lieutenant Bracton's hotel. He and the young ladies were out for a morning walk, but Mrs. Bracton, who was awaiting their return to breakfast, received Mary with such marked regard, as to leave Reuben no doubt that in some way she had surmised the future relationship to her family of the unaffected and beautiful stranger. With this satisfaction, after arranging for her stay at the hotel, her brother made no hesitation in proceeding about urgent business of his own on the Nepean River ; whither he was obliged to make his way by an early coach, having no horse in Sydney.

Reuben had thus no opportunity of joining his friend Lieutenant Bracton in the survey of the new sloop : but this was of little consequence, as he had known her from the time when her keel was first laid down, on the banks of that branch of the Hawkesbury in which she was built. Lieutenant Bracton decidedly approved of Willoughby's choice. " A good sea-boat," said the old gentleman emphatically, directly he had run his eye over her ; " and well built for stowing away cargo."

Again, carrying his own crew with him, Wilmoughby steered down the harbour, accompanied by the old consort of his craft, the *Little Bee*, and a whole host of the Musquito fleet. They had fair weather into Broken Bay heads; where, as he had to run this trip up the Hawkesbury, Reuben and Mary had to be transhipped to the *Bee*.

When the Australian maid turned to make her unobserved adieu to the young skipper, from the deck of the *Bee*, as the new sloop shot off up the main channel, to her surprise and delight she read, in letters of gold, her own name upon the stern. All eyes on both decks were fixed upon her: no one moved, and for a little while no one spoke; then, from the deck of the sloop, there rose, above the bluster of the wind and the roar of Barrenjueh, the sailors' loud huzzas, and her own name mingled with the cheers, as the whole crew waved their caps—even to the little sea-boy, Jack, mounted on the bulwark, and holding on by the rigging; whilst the young skipper, uncovered, stood leaning over the stern. The hands on the schooner returned the shout by a cheer for “The Daisy of the Bay;”—and whether to blush, or cry, or laugh, Mary knew not, till Reuben put

his arms round her, and, taking her hands in his, turned her face to the fresh breeze, and so supported her till they had run round the bluff rock on the starboard beam, into smooth water.

Half an hour's quiet thought, and a few sighs to relieve her surcharged heart, and the healthful maiden was herself again. And when, as the little vessel beat tediously onward toward home, Reuben sat down beside her, and inquired how she had enjoyed herself with the Miss Bractons, she had a tale to tell of deeper interest than any that had fallen to her lot for a long, long time. Unused to the polished grace of an English lady's manner—and, possibly, a little roguishly practised upon by Marianna,—she could not find words fully to express her delight in her new friends. “Oh, brother,” she said, “I wish you had seen Katharine; you never saw anything so lovely. Willoughby's sister is very beautiful; but she is such a clever girl that one is almost afraid of her. But Katharine! oh, she has such eyes, Reuben! And she is so calm and self-possessed, and yet so friendly! And her voice;—you can't get it out of your ear! I hear it still, as if she were here and now speaking. And, then, the way she talks; as if she were

one's mother! And she dresses so nicely; and there is such gracefulness in everything she does. And such beautiful hands!—and her skin!—really, Reuben, on her temples, when the hair is thrown back, it seems as if you could actually see the blood bounding along within her violet veins!”

“There—there—there! that'll do for this time; I can't stop to hear any more. Get all your little traps together; it'll be down-anchor directly. Well, we've made a very quick run. So, you see, Willoughby's done us:—it's the *Mary Kable*, of *Brisbane Water*, after all.”

From this time forward the “*Mary Kable*” maintained an active and lucrative trade on the various waters of Broken Bay. The scarcity of a circulating medium in the Australian colonies has led to the establishment of a system of barter: and this of all modes of commercial traffic is the most lucrative to the dealer; who not only obtains his profit on the goods he gives, but he invariably resells at a second profit those he receives in exchange. But where the master of one of these trading crafts has it in his power to pay in cash for grain, or tobacco in the leaf, sawn

timber, or other produce of the farms on the banks, a still further gain accrues to him, through a lower price being taken by the producers for commodities sold for money, than would be taken if they were merely bartered; whilst yet again the dealer who pays ready money to the Sydney merchants for the goods he buys of them invariably obtains a considerable discount.

It may easily be supposed that the friendship of the young men increased, as each discovered the trustworthiness and capacity of the other. Reuben also could not be blind to his friend's growing attachment to his sister; while Mary, on her part, if she bashfully shunned reasoning upon the point, nevertheless instinctively felt that her partiality for her brother's friend was justified, both by his inherent qualities and by her brother's previous recognition of them. Never before had she seen the thoughtful, and at times seemingly almost haughty, Reuben, make a familiar acquaintance with others. Probably he had not done so now, but that the consciousness of having rendered Willoughby and his family an important service dispersed the habitual reserve which belonged to his character, and led him at once into a degree of familiar intercourse

which proved the more agreeable to him from its novelty.

Henceforth many an evening did Mary while away by her reminiscences of her trip to Sydney; but on whatsoever point of the subject she began, she invariably ended with a eulogy of "dear Katharine." One while it was her beauty; another time it was her goodness; then it was—"Oh! brother, I never told you about the little boy that's so fond of her. His mother and father, you know, have just come out from England, and are staying at the same hotel. And the little fellow, though he is only about two years and a half old, comes a dozen times a day, and beats at the door, and when they open it and say, 'Well, sir, whom do you want?' He says, 'Kath., Kath.;' so Katharine takes him on her lap, and spreads a whole tableful of drawings before him; and, when he's tired of looking at them, he throws himself back in her arms with a sigh, and goes to sleep. Then Katharine takes him to his mama's room and lays him on the bed; but by-and-bye he's back at the door again to get to 'Kath.'"

"There, there. Pray don't tell me any more."

“ Ah ! it’s very unkind of you, Reuben, not to listen. You always want to stop me when I begin to talk about dear Katharine. If you had seen her yourself, you wouldn’t do so.”



## CHAPTER XII.

The Cattle-stealers in danger of detection.—The Bullock-driver Shepherding.—Aversion of Cattle to Sheep.—Branding Cattle.—A trap for the Welshman.

THE transactions at the Rocky Springs now throw themselves into a twelvemonth's tale. Before leaving Sydney, Lieutenant Bracton, as a naval officer, and known to be a settler of substance, received for himself and his family an invitation to one of the public parties at Government House; and, becoming thus personally known to his Excellency the Governor, was a few days afterwards gazetted as a magistrate of the territory.

On their arrival at home, the family found the new cottage complete in every respect, and fit for inhabitation. The unwearied industry and policy of Beck had also added an enclosure at the sides and front, with neat open paling for a flower garden: a kitchen garden had been already formed, by the parting off of a small piece of the cultivated ground in the flat.

The increase of the sheep being sufficient for forming two full flocks of lambs, these were now weaned and running at fresh stations; so that now there were altogether six flocks: two of these were carried out some distance ahead, the others remained at the stations already established.

The overseer was "too good a judge" to take advantage of his having entire control on the farm, for shewing any increased severity to the Welshman: he knew that any such procedure would tell against himself; whilst, on the other hand, the conduct of everything without disturbance, and the entire neglect of such an opportunity of molesting the bullock-driver, would speak as strongly in his favour. It was quite in vain, therefore, that the more impatient and short-sighted Morgan Brown urged him to seize this opportunity for entrapping the Welshman: Martin knew that such a step in the absence of Lieutenant Bracton, would be closely scrutinized by the police magistrate, and perhaps dragged to a second examination on the return of the family. He was determined to "finish off" his man effectually the next time he made the attempt; and the virulent malignity he indulged in towards him was so undisguised, both to Brown

and himself, that it was indeed foreign to his character to take a second hasty and incomplete step.

A few days after the return of the lieutenant and his family, and toward the close of one of the last warm days of the summer, Martin Beck rode leisurely over the ridge at the back of Coolarama Creek hut, and down the hill obliquely, (to break the descent) toward the hut and stockyard. The stockman was out; but the hutkeeper, in the customary style of his order (which is almost without exception composed of the laziest fellows in the colony), was taking his afternoon lounge: he lay half asleep on his little flock pallet extended along the rude berth, formed of round sapling uprights with their bark on, with similar side and cross-pieces covered with a sheet of bark, on which the bedding was laid. The black entered unperceived; leaving his horse to graze on the fine green sward that gradually forms around a station where the ground is tolerably moist.

“Hollo, Rowley!” he cried, stammering as usual. “What, taking a bandge? You hut-keepers do it up rummy. I wish I could get such a chance. Where’s Morgan.”

“He’ll be here directly; he told me to keep

his dinner at the fire for him," replied the hut-keeper, drowsily, throwing his arms abroad from his face, over which they had been gathered to break the strong light of the afternoon sun slanting full in at the low door. "I'm thinking there'll be enough for us all to do directly. We'll all have to leave off bandging it for a bit."

"How's that."

"Oh! our cove's coming to muster all the cattle on the run."

"The deuce he is! What's that for."

"Sold three hundred head to some 'free object' that's just come to the colony. So," he continued—for the principals had not allowed him to become fully informed as to actual matter of fact, though it was impossible to prevent him from having certain notions of his own about them—"if you and Morgan don't look out, I judge there'll be a screw loose. I think Morgan wants to see you,—should'nt wonder if he has'nt gone over to your place now. He asked if you had been here, and then galloped off in a precious hurry."

To these remarks the overseer made no reply, further than an almost inaudible expression of surprise and vexation; but, stooping, he passed out again through the low doorway, and, after

listening for a few seconds in various directions, walked restlessly to and fro in front of the hut.

At length the clatter of a horse's hoofs rising the range on the opposite side at a quick pace arrested his attention; and in a few minutes the rider's straw hat, and then his figure, and his horse's, became visible over the top of the hill: Beck recognised the stockman. Breaking, as customary, the steepness of the descent by an oblique course, Morgan Brown was seen approaching with the single spur, short stirrups, and gathered whip, characteristic of his occupation; urging his horse more rapidly than some riders would think safe, where the foot-hold was only on loose stones. Jumping off his horse as it reached the level, but leaving the saddle and bridle on, and turning it to "pick" on the short grass round the hut, he came forward. A single glance in each other's faces sufficed to effect an understanding that there was something amiss.

"Something must be done, my hearty! and that directly," said the stockman. "My cove's very near here: if he's not already got on to the run, he can't be above a day's stage off at most. Warraghi Bill rode eighteen hours yesterday to get a day a head of him, to tell

me he was coming ; but he travels so sharp that there's no knowing after all if he was n't close on Warraghi's horse's tail all day. However, he's a precious 'lusington,' that's one thing ; and if he comes through Ghiagong he'll never get by Peter Burne's without half a dozen of champagne."

"Does Warraghi know anything about my cattle?" inquired Beck in a tone of irritation. "Warraghi's not a sound man, to my thinking."

"No," replied the stockman ; "but he does about mine. You're always afraid of *yourself*, Mr. Blueskin : no matter to you if every stockman in the quarter got lagged, so as you didn't yourself."

"That's as *you* say."

"Well, it's no use jawing about that now. Something must be done."

"Well, what is it to be?"

"There's one thing," said Morgan ; "they're all together." Checking himself, he turned to the hutkeeper, who had come outside to join the conference : "The milking cattle are just over the hill, Rowley ; you had better drive them up to the yard before they wander off again.—I don't know what to make of that fellow," he

added, as soon as the hutkeeper was out of hearing ; “ he does n’t know much, but what he does know is too much. I’m not afraid of his saying anything to the cove ; but he ’s very thick with your bullock-driver, and I expect they have their yarns about us.”

“ I don’t see the harm, after all, of them few head stopping on your run. Who’s to know who claims ’em ?”

“ Why, that ’s just the very thing,” rejoined Morgan. “ Here ’s my cove coming to pick out three hundred head for a sale he ’s made : he ’ll be all over the run in about six hours. He was surveying in this part for two or three years, and there ’s hardly a tree from one end of the bush to the other that he does n’t know ; so that he ’ll be down in every gully, and up over every range. And, my word, if there ’s a thing to be seen he ’ll see it ; for he ’s got an eye in his head like a hawk. Then, when he comes home to the hut, it ’ll be— ‘ Morgan Brown, where did all those young cattle branded MB and MB in a circle, come from ? Who owns them ?’ ‘ *I’m sure I don’t know, sir !*’ ‘ Don’t know ! That ’s queer : about a dozen head, all under eighteen months, and no mothers with ’em ! not a single aged beast among them !

All picked cattle too! first-rate cattle! And all heifers!—that's what I look at. Where, in the name of the pipers, did they come from? Now, Morgan, do you think such a lot as that ever singled out of a herd and wandered here of themselves? Come, come, Mr. Brown, don't gammon green: tell us all about it.' There,—that'll be just how he'll go on. Then, what am I to say?"

"Well, if your cove's what you say, the sooner they're moved the better: I did n't know till now that he was such a good judge of cattle. But where are they to go to? If they're taken away by themselves, they'll be off. The one half of 'em will never be gathered again."

"They'd better go into that mob of mountaineers that always runs separate from your quiet cattle in the ranges."

"But the two mobs are always joining, and often stay together in the flat for the half day at a stretch, when the "Russians" come down to the creek to water; and there's no water anywhere else now, you know."

"And then you think the Welshman will see 'em?"

"Of course."



“Well, then, why don’t you put him somewhere, where he’ll have a better job? Is a fellow always to live in fear of his life, through him? If I was in your place, I’d soon be level chalks with him.”

“Ah! easier said than done,” replied the black. “However, we can do this little business safe enough. We’ll take ’em off your run, and drive ’em into our wild mob, and let ’em come down among the quiet cattle if they will. The cove himself just knows as much which are his own cattle as if he’d bought them to-morrow. If the Durham bull was to be branded for his next-door neighbour, he’d never notice it: he neither takes notice of beasts nor brands; so, there’s no fear of *his* knowing any of the lot again. And I’ll persuade him to send the Welshman shepherding for a few days at one of the out-stations, till your governor is off to Sydney again.”

“You’d a great deal best take and get that Welshman out of the way: if you don’t, worse’ll come of it. Now mind what I tell you, Martin;—see if my words don’t come true.”

“Well, well; I’ve told you, the first chance I can get, I will. But I won’t make any more

mulls: next time I try, it must be done clean work. Let's be off, and run these heifers over to one of the camping grounds."

"Where do your mountaineers camp, now the pipe-clay creek is dry?"

"They're making a new camping ground about a mile back from the creek, over the first range; where that large sandy flat is with the black wattles in."

"Come, then," said Brown. And away they both started, to execute their project; which, as the reader will have understood, was that of securing themselves from detection by either Morgan's master on the one hand, or the proprietor of the Rocky Springs on the other.

Morgan, who took care of Martin's booty, was allowed by him to brand an odd beast now and then out of the Rocky Springs herd for himself; and the whole lot had now to be kept off Morgan's run till his master was gone down the country again: at the same time, care had to be taken to prevent the cattle being recognised by the Welshman on Lieutenant Bracton's run. But this piece of cunning was destined to defeat itself. The Welshman would still have continued to suppose that the MBs were

brands of members of the family, if he had remained at his ordinary occupation and observed them; but the very circumstance of his being sent shepherding, was the first of the train of events that terminated in Martin Beck's detection and ruin.

After the cattle had been satisfactorily disposed of, the overseer went on to compass his second point, of getting John Thomas out of the way. He was depending on one of the shepherds who was ill, giving up his flock to go to hospital; and on there being no spare hand to supply his place at the time but the bullock-driver. The sick man was one of a lot of prisoners who had been assigned; and Martin, before returning to the farm, rode round to the station where he was, and suggested to him that he ought not to trifle with his disorder; hinting that, if he really felt ill enough to go to hospital, he would take care that he had some tea, sugar, and tobacco, and a few shillings in his pocket. This proved effectual; and next morning, by breakfast time, the man was at the farm, and reported himself too ill to take out his flock.

Lieutenant Bracton, after giving him a "pass" to the nearest hospital (nearly a hundred miles

away), had to inform the overseer of the necessity for sending out a substitute, and to consult him as to who it could be. The wily black easily convinced him that no other man then on the farm, but the Welshman, could be spared; and instantly sent to summon John Thomas, that he might receive orders to proceed to the station and take charge of the flock, from Lieutenant Bracton himself, and thus have no appeal.

John Thomas, who was by no means careful to maintain the same amiable temper in the presence of Mr. Bracton as he invariably did before the ladies, received his orders with a very bad grace. "Tam the sheep!—there is never any luck where it is:—cutting up the grass like a locust, and leaving nothing for the poor beasts to drink; and driving away the cattle:—going 'alking about everywhere, and the cattle 'ont feed after it. I never hire again for general service. I never have hire till this time for anything but bullock-driving; nor I never hire no more for anything but that." The opening imprecation was uttered as he stood facing Lieutenant Bracton and the overseer, and the concluding declaration was completed at about a hundred yards off, as he passed through the

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doorway of his hut; though he had not ceased speaking : he thus avoided hearing any comments which Mr. Bracton might have to make, either as master or magistrate.

From the sentiments just expressed by John Thomas, it will be concluded that both sheep and shepherds are in very ill favour with the stockmen in our Australian colonies, as well as with the bullock-drivers : such is the case. Cattle almost invariably refuse to feed after sheep ; and thus, wandering restlessly over the ground where sheep have passed, frequently get far away from where they ought to be, and give incalculable trouble to the men employed in looking after them. The consequence is, a settled feud between those who tend cattle and those who tend sheep : little entertained by the shepherds, however, because their flocks suffer no annoyance from the passage of cattle over their run ; but very strongly felt by the stockkeepers, in consequence of the aversion manifested by their herds at the transit of sheep over their feeding-ground, or the approach of a flock to their water-holes. The annoyance, indeed, occasioned by sheep to horned cattle is sometimes so great, that they will even charge the flock, and scatter it in all directions.

Consequently, no task could have been found for the Welshman which he would have set about so reluctantly, and have obstinately gone on performing with such a dogged and perverse disregard to all but the mere form, as this. There was probably nothing else he could have been set to do, in doing which his first thought would not have been his employer's advantage: but in shepherding he only felt that the sheep were "*a curse wherever they went.*" Whatever became of them, he would take care of his bullocks; keeping on their track, and not letting them get scattered apart; and wherever he could find the best feed, driving them to it, and keeping the sheep away. Now, these two occupations of shepherd and bullock-watchman, it was impossible for John Thomas, or any one else, to perform adequately together: hence the difficulties into which he was hastening to throw himself.

The expedient of the cattle-stealers to avoid immediate detection proved thus far successful; the surveyor gathered his lot of cattle, and delivered them to the purchaser's stockman, and returned to Sydney; nor did any one belonging to the Rocky Springs (except Martin himself) notice the strange MB brands among the cattle.

And now that important period to all connected in any way with horned cattle, the annual branding-day, approached, when the bullock-driver sees the whole herd together. If there be one more likely to turn out a strong and kindly worker than another, he can point it out, and get leave to bring it under the yoke. The stock-keeper, too, has on that day to give a full account of how he has executed his trust: he must show the produce of every cow, or account for its non-appearance; and he must find a mother for every calf, or give good reason for her absence. Without such a system, indeed, it would be impossible for a settler to retain his cattle and their increase. The settler himself, therefore, also looks upon the annual muster, or branding-day, as it is frequently called, as one of the most important in the twelve months; all unbranded beasts over six months old, and often under, being on that day marked with the owner's initials, or other marks. In the establishments of the elder settlers, these branding-days are conducted with no little ceremony; everything goes forward in a settled form, and every one has his appointed office. The records are most exactly kept, and most carefully appealed to; every beast being exa-

mined, as described by his or her marks in the stockbook: if female, and possessed of a this-year's calf, that calf is minutely described, and booked to her.

In short, everything is done that will act as a stringent check upon the notorious and admitted predatory inclinations of the stockmen. Of course, none of these men will acknowledge any particular act of an illegal nature; but they never think of disputing the general truth that "they do a little when they have a chance." This vigorous system of "taking stock"—or rather of *keeping it*—never gives them the slightest offence; whilst it is absolutely indispensable to the possessors of large herds.

As yet, neither the extent of his herd nor an acquaintance with the habits of other farms had led Lieutenant Bracton to adopt this rigid style of muster: the operation of branding and the formality of a yearly gathering were the chief elements in his notion of a muster-day. He was, moreover, of an easy, generous, and unsuspicious nature.

On the previous evening, all the cattle which could be readily got at, big and little, wild and tame, were driven together by Martin Beck, Morgan



Brown, Dubbo, and several other of the nearest stockmen; for, on these occasions, they help each other alternately. The whole herd were then secured in the yard for the night.

In the morning, soon after sunrise, a three-log fire was kindled just outside the stockyard fence, contiguous to one of the strong round corner-posts: the iron brands were laid in order before it, and the long catching-rope and pole placed ready, close at hand. Soon afterwards the gathering for the day's work commenced: Lieutenant Bracton made his appearance from the cottage; whereupon Martin, Morgan, and Dubbo jumped down from off the rails where they had been sitting, into the dusty yard.

"Who's going to rope?" asks Dubbo. The Black takes the roping-stick, which is handed to him through the rails by one of the subs outside.

This roping-stick or catching-pole, as it is indiscriminately called, is a thin sapling of the best wood that can be procured from the bush near at hand, twelve or fifteen feet in length, just large enough at one end to be handily managed by both hands, and having a small fork at the other. Over the forked extremity the slip-noose

of the catching-rope is hung, the rope itself being brought loosely down along the pole toward the person using it, with the far end trailing on the ground.

Slowly, cautiously, and stealthily the black creeps up, partly behind and partly off to the side of a young steer, holding in front the catching pole (its treacherous noose somewhat elevated) with loose arms but firm grasp. The noose comes level with the steer's head; then in a moment down it goes over his head and round his neck, close home to the shoulders; the pole drops clear, leaving the rope only in the roper's hands; the steer gives a rush, and the noose is tight. The beast plunges round the yard, forcing his way into the midst of the struggling multitude whose turn is to come, and rushes to the length of the rope, trying to break it. But all is in vain; the rope is now round the corner-post, half a dozen strong men are at the end of it, and every time he slackens it in his careerings, they take in the slack and hold on till he slackens it again. At length, between his own misdirected struggles, and the urging of those around him, his head is dragged hard up against the post. The leg-rope is now passed round his hind legs; which, in like

manner, are dragged up to one of the smaller posts. "The brand! the brand!" shouts the overseer, and instantly a man stationed for the purpose hands the iron handle of the red-hot instrument through the fence to the operator; who, selecting the most flat place on the shoulder, holds it firmly on, whilst a white smoke curls upward into the air, filling it with a nauseous odour; the baffled and tortured animal moaning and sougning with the pain. In a quarter of a minute the instrument has done its work; for, on withdrawing it, the skin is seen marked with the initials of its owner, destitute of hair and scorched. Then the leg-rope is first cautiously unloosed; next the neck-rope is slackened, and the stockmen falling back, the terrified and smarting steer, becoming sensible that he is free extricates his head, and hurries away into the thickest of the herd.

But the black is determined to brand that ferocious slate-coloured monster of seven years old, that has been several times trying to chase everybody out of the yard. He is buffalo-bred, with a hump over his shoulders like a dromedary's; his body almost as long as two beasts, deep-chested, and short-legged for his breed, but as

flat as two deal boards clapped together : a sour-looking brute, neither fit for knife nor yoke. He is the leader of the wildest mob, and turns and faces the dogs when being driven into bounds. He has long been a sharp irritant of the stockmen's bile ; and none the less so that his rough, dark hide is yet clear of a brand : hitherto he has defied conquest.

“ You'll never get him, Martin,” cries Morgan Brown.

“ It's him or me for it now ;” says the black ; “ now I've taken a fancy to him. One of you chaps that's doing nothing, run down to my hut and fetch that black fellow's waddie : it's under the berth.”

The Australian waddie, it may be explained, for the benefit of those who have never seen the weapon, is virtually a club, whatever particular form the taste of some individual warrior may give it. It is not possible always to distinguish the *waddie* from the *nullah-nullah*, on account of the minute transitions by which they pass into one another. Probably, however, the *nullah-nullah* is of mace or axe form ; whilst the *waddie* is strictly a staff. Its length is from twenty-one inches to two feet, and it is invariably formed of

the toughest, hardest, and most ponderous wood that can be got; indeed, some of these waddies when taken into the hand give the idea of so much metal. That now sent for by Martin was of full length, tapering out slightly at first from the hand, but at about three-fifths of its length swelling suddenly into a bulk of three inches in diameter, and then falling off as suddenly to an apex.

“ That’ll send the old Dustman (such was the cant name the animal’s colour had obtained him) to sleep, Martin: only take care you don’t miss your mark,” said the messenger, as he tossed the waddie over to the Black; who by this time had got all ready again for roping.

“ You’d better mind what you’re after, Blue-skin,” shouted Warraghi Bill, who just then rode up to the side of the yard: “ he’s a rum customer: he chased me three miles one afternoon.”

“ Hunt’em all up, Dubbo,” said the Black, “ and get him just a little way in the tail of ’em: not too far; but where I can reach him.”

As he was directed, the Dubliner crowded the mob in which the huge, sulky-looking animal stood, over to one side of the yard; and swept in another little group at his heels. But no sooner had he done so than the beast, suspecting the

purpose or annoyed by the confinement, forced himself face about, and holding up his head above the rest for an instant, suddenly lowered it, and pushed through and charged full at his adversary. Dubbo, who saw what was coming, ran for the fence, and was over the top just time enough to save himself from being impaled by the long horns, or jammed by the flat and massive head of the beast, as it came crash against one of the middle rails, riving it nearly through.

“Better rails than you thought, my old boy,” shouted the Black; “some of my putting up! Ay, come again!” Down went the monster’s head, as he turned and saw this second antagonist, and shut his eyes for another rush. “Come on: let’s see what you can do,” yelled the black, as he hastily flung down the rope and pole, and retained only the waddie, which he held a few inches from the end, and balanced lightly some inches above his shoulder, by an arm that looked like a short section of a twisted cable. The furious beast burst forward with a suppressed bellow, blowing up a cloud of dust; and the Black, making a short agile spring sideways, delivered the knob of the waddie with seemingly slight exertion, but unwavering aim, full on to the curl of the

forehead of the mountain giant. Down went the huge brute on his side with a dead lumbering sound, and lay wildly kicking at the feet of his unequal foe. In an instant the waddie was thrown aside, and the slip-noose tightened round the horns of the stunned animal, and fast secured round the corner post; the whole strength of hands about the yard being employed to take in the slack.

"Nobly done, Martin!" exclaimed Lieutenant Bracton, who had stood watching, as an old sea-officer may be supposed to look on at such a feat, to see whether his overseer's courage would hold out.

"Oh! I'm used to these customers, sir," said the black, vauntingly but respectfully. "Here, my hearties! if he won't get up, we'll finish him where he is. Another rope,—the new green hide one." Still, though Martin kicked the beast and twisted his tail, he refused to move; perhaps dizzy with the blow. The hide rope being brought was quickly passed and tightened round the root of his spreading horns, and carried across and made fast to one of the posts of the gate; so that, in the event of his now rising, he was restrained by two ropes in opposite directions. In another minute a rope was round his hind fetlocks,

and being passed forward between them was carried up between his fore-legs, and round his neck, and again back between his hind legs, which were thus drawn as close up to his chest as possible; four of the hands holding on. As many more as could be spared, with the serviceable addition of the master—who was equal to any three in the yard, Martin excepted—finally threw themselves, kneeling, on the beast's flank, or held down his head.

“Now for the brand! Hold fast all of you,” cried the black, and planting his foot on the upper part of the fore-leg of the animal to hold the muscles steady, he again applied the heated iron, which singed the hair, scorched the hide, and was withdrawn. Not a movement did the grim but vanquished savage make; not a groan did he utter: but his dim, blue eyeball, bloodshot with rage and pain, glared like lurid flame. “Now, hold on, all of you!” cried the black, “till I get the rope ready for slipping, and this green hide-rope off.” The men and master retained their places till the second catching rope was off, and the leg-rope so far released that it would slip free in the effort of the beast to rise. “No, he's not awake yet: lay down that leg-rope! Easy,



easy: be smart over the fence. There!" exclaimed the black, when they were all out, as he stooped behind the old Russian's head and slackened the first noose, expanding it so that it would clear his horns; "there! Now you may go." And no longer needing to be any more than a spectator, he startled the animal by a dab in the face with his broad-leafed straw-hat, and before the beast could spring to his feet was up on the top of one of the posts. For one instant after he regained his feet, the infuriated animal looked round; and then at one wild bound cleared the fence at the lower end. Loud were the shouts that followed him, and fierce the bay of the pack at his heels; but only faster and fiercer flew the enormous brute towards the hills; whilst numbers of his comrades left behind in the yard, and no longer restrained by the presence of men amongst them, crowded to the side from which he had escaped, seeking an outlet to follow him.

Much in the same way proceeded the branding throughout the day; but no more beasts so formidable as the last had to be dealt with. About four o'clock in the afternoon, the overseer, after going through the herd, pronounced that all

which needed it were branded; the common hands then strolled off one by one to their huts, and Lieutenant Bracton walked home to the cottage. Martin, Morgan, Dubbo, and Warraghi alone remained in the yard.

“Why did you leave that black and white calf, Blueskin?” inquired Dubbo.

“Can’t you guess?” asked Morgan, laughing: forgetting that Warraghi was not high in Martin’s estimation as to trustiness; “that’s an MB you know.”

Martin made a sign to the speaker, but it was too late. “Here,” continued Morgan, with a view to atone for his inadvertency,—“we can brand her without the catching-rope; you fetch the brand, Martin, while Warraghi, Dubbo and I’ll catch her and throw her, against you come back.”

Martin instantly perceived that this was a stratagem to make Warraghi a participator in the felonious act, and thus secure his secrecy once for all, and he hastened readily off to his hut for the brand; whilst Warraghi, thus appealed to, had no alternative but to concur, or by refusing proclaim himself a ‘square’ man, and be sent to Coventry by all the stockmen in the district.

The calf was soon caught and thrown; and a few seconds sufficed to heat the brand sufficiently for so young a beast.

At the instant after Dubbo had handed the heated brand through the fence, the Welshman walked up to his side; and placing his arms on one of the rails looked quietly on, saying nothing. Dubbo ‘a-hem’d!’ again and again; but the three who were engaged with the calf were too closely occupied to notice the intended intimation. To have given any more intelligible token would have only drawn the Welshman’s notice to what was going on, more effectually than it might be already; so Dubbo could do no more. The branding over, the three stood back, and the little animal sprang up and ran bleating to its mother.

Then for the first time Martin, Morgan, and Warraghi observed the Welshman to have been a looker-on. For an instant they all stood confounded; but the Welshman broke silence, speaking very civilly: for though a bullock-driver is a supreme and irresponsible authority on the road, he is nobody at the stockyard.

“That old brindled bullock of mine, lads; she is very poor: her bones is almost come through

her skin. Get her out of the yard as quick as you can ; you know she have had nothing to eat and have not been to water since last night."

"It shall be done, John," quickly replied Dubbo, in a most courteous and flattering tone ; shrewdly apprehending that the Welshman, somehow or other, did not understand what had been going on before his very eyes. And on his moving quickly towards the slip rails, and taking them down, Martin and his coadjutors inside the yard immediately drove out the whole mob ; at once conceiving that the best thing now was to get the stolen calf off into the bush as speedily as possible.

As regarded the Welshman, it was just as Dubbo had imagined. Hearing from Warraghi, who passed his station that morning, that the cattle were in for muster ever since the night before, John Thomas had handed over his sheep to his hutkeeper (though this was quite contrary to rule), and had come partly to see if Martin had found and reclaimed the mob that used to be about Coolarama Creek run, and partly to get any of his own workers turned out that night, in case the branding should not be completed in one day, and the herd consequently kept yarded another night. However, he had seen as he

came along the mob of MBs, or most of them ; which he supposed were Mrs. and Miss Bractons, and in the black and white calf now branded before his face he only saw another added to the ladies' stock.

The Welshman's interpretation of the MBs, however, was still entirely unsuspected by the stockmen : yet so civilly had he spoken, that they could not believe he was aware of its real signification. It was several minutes after the initiated four had got into Martin's hut and began to smoke, before they could make out what to say about it; even to one another. The first who broke silence was Morgan Brown.

" Well, this is a rum go; isn't it ? "

" Ay," responded Martin.

" If he noticed the brand of that single beast, you're in for the whole lot, Martin," continued Morgan.

" How am I in for the *whole* lot ? " retorted the black ; sneeringly emphasizing the word " whole."

" Well, all I mean to say is, somebody or other is in for all with the same brand."

" I don't believe," suggested Dubbo, " he saw what brand it was."

" I wouldn't trust him for that: he's wider

awake than he lets on to be," replied Morgan. "There 's but one thing to be done, Martin ; and done it must be if we don't want to be done ourselves. That calf must be 'put on one side.' Dubbo and Warraghi can run all the other MBs off towards their stations as they go home—they lie just in their way—and keep 'em out of sight till you see whether there 's anything up : and you and I must go and single off that calf and put it out of the way."

It was unanimously agreed that this was the most prudent plan. One of Martin's partisans at the big hut was consequently instructed (though without telling him the reason) to keep a sharp look out whether John Thomas went to the cottage, and what sort of communication, if any, he had with the family. Dubbo and Warraghi, having had their tea and lit their pipes, saddled and rode off to manage their part of the business ; and presently afterwards the overseer and Morgan Brown also mounted and departed.

The dusk of evening had now set in, and the weather changed from sultry heat to a fast drizzling rain. The grass was already saturated with wet, and the ground began to get plashy and greasy under the horses' feet. The herd,

hungry from their fast, were grazing greedily along in straggling groups down the flat, half a mile below: some down in the creek, the better to get at the rank feed on its edge; others in the middle of the flat, and a few right over on the better grass growing in the moist ground that had the drainage from the opposite range. With as little noise as possible, to avoid attracting notice, Martin and Morgan gathered all the herd together, and made the best of their way with them for a couple of miles onward toward the river. "Now," said Morgan, "we'll single out the calf and her mother, and run 'em up this easy slope on to the top, where there's a creek that runs down about three miles to a hollow of rocks: that'll be the place. They'll drive well down the creek." On receiving Martin's assent, he rode over with his own dog, a strong knowing colley, to the wing where the cow and calf were moving along, and pointed out the cow to him. "There, Tallboy! fetch her out. There, there! not that one:—there, the black cow: good fellow! turn her again! put her away." The rest of the herd scampered off at full speed, and the cow stood at bay with her calf at her side, unable to make her escape. The other cattle now out of the way,

Martin let the rest of the dogs fall on, and the cow with her terrified calf took the only way left open, and bolted straight forward for the range; on reaching it, the well-trained dogs, still at her heels, spread round on either side, leaving, her no other course than to face up the easy slope of the range to the top; whence the animal sped forward at a running pace down the creek to the rock-girt hollow. It was but a few acres in extent, quite flat and treeless, swampy in the middle, and covered with rank growing rushes, with here and there a broken line of bunches of flags marking the wettest part. At the further end of the oval was a gap in the rocky barrier, where the waters poured into it by the creek found an outlet; but so filled was this channel with huge blocks of stone, rounded by the wear of the waters and slippery with wet moss, that there was no possibility of the cow carrying her calf through it. Towards it, however, she plunged, followed by the horsemen and dogs, through the soft ground; the heavier animals sometimes sinking half leg deep: but at the stone-blocked gap her flight was at an end, and she turned and faced her pursuers, the calf seeking protection beneath her belly. "Now, pin



her!” shouted the stockman to the farm bulldog. —“No! no! Crabb; not the young one, the old woman. That’s the boy!” Creeping almost on his face close up to the cow’s nose, Crabb had made one “grab,” and got hold of the poor animal by the cartilage between the nostrils, and thus held her motionless; for the agony of a dog’s bite on this sensitive part of horned cattle is such, that, when thus seized, they frequently submit and remain motionless, rather than aggravate the torture by a struggle. The hunters, jumping off their horses, quickly removed the calf, bleating and bounding, from the shelter of its mother; and it was so exhausted by its long run that the two could easily hold it. The cow, however, in spite of her suffering, was no sooner deprived of her calf, and excited by its cries, than she tossed her head wildly aloft to throw off the dog; but the fierce bulldog, true to his instinct, held fast, though surged back violently against the ground. “Put all the dogs on the cursed brute, Martin; she’ll be loose directly, and’ll spike one of us,” growled Morgan, who now alone had hold of the calf, in stifled tones.

“I’ll be shot if I like,” replied the black: “it’s a precious cowardly job, this.”

“Hey! hey! sowl her, boys!” roared Morgan: and on went the whole pack, seizing the poor beast by the ears, nose, and even eyelids. Morgan threw his leg over the calf at a little behind the shoulders, and seizing one of its budding horns with his right hand and its under jaw with his left, he suddenly gave the nose one fierce wrench round upwards, and it lay dead at his feet: in a minute his knife was out, and the bit of hide which had been so lately scorched by the brand was flayed off and in his pocket. The confederates, now calling off the dogs, jumped once more into their saddles, soaked and dripping with the rain, and made the best of their way each to his home, leaving the poor cow to starve and moan through the wet and gusty night over her lifeless calf.

“I’ll go down to-morrow, Blueskin, and burn the carcass. It won’t do to let it stop there,” said Morgan before they separated. Both felt glad that so much of security at least had been achieved.

In proportion to the cowardice in man, is the amount of cruelty he may be tempted to perpetrate in the endeavour to escape a threatening danger. Morgan Brown was a coward at all

points; personal danger terrified him no less than the endangerment of his circumstances, position, and desires: the black, on the contrary, was sound to the core in all matters of physical peril, though infinitely more alive than even Morgan to anything threatening his reputation, influence, and possessions. Morgan lived jollily on through all dangers, except when something brought them to his recollection, and awoke his fears: Martin lived in a perpetual secret consciousness of his jeopardy; his terror of detection was alleviated by no forgetfulness; and his malignity toward the Welshman was as continuous and unwavering as his apprehensions for himself were acute. He had no pity for him, though he revolted against the cruelty which Morgan made so little of towards the dumb animals.

From the time of this occurrence, the black began to feel that there was an urgency in the danger which he had not considered before. He now became sensible of the fact that, besides the actual probable danger, there was yet another,—the possible: a thousand unforeseen accidents might occur, any one of which would ensure his detection; and his restless and energetic mind began unconsciously to ponder what could be

done to break up the array of circumstances around him, and reconstruct them to his own advantage. In this temper, he needed but little urging from Morgan to proceed to summary and strenuous measures for getting rid of the Welshman. That intellectual intuition which belongs equally to vicious and virtuous passion had guided Morgan, before he had left Martin five minutes on the evening of the branding-day, to the only expedient available to avert his danger; which he felt was such that it was narrowing in upon him silently every day. "Out of this part the Welshman must go," said Morgan to himself, "and this is the time. Now he's shepherding, there's a chance to trap him that there'll never be again." It was some time before he could nerve himself to break it to Martin; but at length he did.

"Blueskin, how is it to be? Are we to get lagged?"

"You know best, I suppose," replied Martin; "not yet exactly prepared what to determine on."

"Is the Welshman to stop here, and 'nose' all, or is he not? There, that's the point."

"Can you get Captain Bracton to let him go?"

or get him to go, if Captain Bracton is willing to let him ? ”

“ Both.”

“ You can ! I wish you’d tell me how.”

“ If Master John Hurley sends him, I suppose he’ll go, won’t he ? That is, provided a Queen’s messenger goes with him.”

“ Ay ! but how’ll you persuade Master John to do this ? ”

“ I suppose, if Captain Bracton lets him go, Mr. Hurley is n’t so much in love with him but what he’ll send him : that is, you know, with a good reason.”

“ Well ! but how ?—how ? You’ve either got something very deep to come, Brown, or else you’re a precious flat.”

“ Give his sheep the scab ; and when they’ve got it well out, tell him of some of his bullocks being on the Government road ; and, my word, he’ll break the Act directly.”

The Black saw in an instant that Morgan had indeed suggested a feasible project. Had he happened to think of it first himself, it would have appeared but little objectionable ; but suggested by another, it staggered him for an instant.

A colonial regulation, prohibiting infected sheep

from travelling on the public roads during certain months was in force: it would be an easy thing to entrap the unsuspecting and obstinate Welshman into a violation of it; and the regulation was considered so important by both settlers and magistrates, that an offender would have little chance of escape if guilty of a breach of it.

“ Well,” said Martin at last, “ I suppose that must be it. And it serves him right. *He knows as much about me as I know myself*—does he ?”

“ Ay,” replied Morgan; “ that was the very word he said.”

“ What business has he to mind me? Oh, I hadn’t forgot it, Morgan, I was only waiting for the chance. This will do I think: I didn’t think you’d got such a gift, old man. And now how can it be managed ?”

“ Why, out beyond me about twenty miles, there is a station where the sheep have got the scab bad: very bad indeed; and the master is a regular screw—half-starves the Government hands. I know one fellow that’s got a flock next us: he’s half a natural, and looks as if a good gust of wind would blow him to pieces—a proper fat Jack of the bone-house: but that’s the lad that knows how to eat. Now, I’ll just ride

over and gammon him that I want a feed at his hut, just in the end of the week when his rations are all gone; and when he says it's empty bags, I'll condole with him, and tell him that if he'll feed his sheep over to my place, I'll give him a good lump of beef. He's as good as old cheese to come, and then let one of your chaps tell the Welshman some of his bullocks are lying in the creek about my hut; and there he'll come driving over red-hot the next morning, dogging his sheep along as if they were kangaroos, and run slap into the scabby flock. Will that work?

"Yes, well."

"It's to be so, then?"

"I don't care," said the black; "if it will do for you, it will do for me: he's brought it all on himself. And as for Captain Bracton, I've done everything to make a good farm for him that any overseer could do: but I'm getting sick of it, Morgan."

In the course of a few days Morgan Brown was as good as his word. He had three of the Welshman's bullocks in the creek above the Coolarama Creek hut; and he had the diseased flock camped, in the heat of noon, under the trees behind the hut; so that John Thomas, when

he came for his bullocks, driving his sheep over the hill-top, should run unawares into the midst of them. The consequence would be that the mingled flocks must be run into the stockyard and drafted by hand ; which is done by catching all the sheep of the smallest flock and putting them outside, whilst the other flock is left untouched within. It thus involved a couple of hours of the closest and most contaminating contact.

The Welshman's consternation at this occurrence was so intense, that he thought no more of his bullocks, but drove back to his run in headlong haste, immediately he had got the diseased sheep draughted away from his own. Under such circumstances shepherds are sure to keep their own counsel ; Morgan's hutkeeper was a fellow-countryman of John Thomas's, and therefore equally sure to be silent upon the subject. Morgan, whilst he really held his tongue for his own purposes, took advantage of his promise of silence to intimate to the Welshman that one good turn deserved another.

Some little time elapsed, as usual, before the virulent and contagious disease began to manifest itself : an interval full of remorseful anxiety to John Thomas. Yet so inveterate was the self-



will of his character, that these painful feelings effected no change in his habits: wherever he could hear of one of his team having strayed, thither he followed with his flock, and sought it.

At length he could see one and another of the sheep, when the heat of the day came on, standing rubbing against trees; then, after a few days more, numbers were to be seen thus occupied at the same time. Martin and Morgan occasionally rode across his run; and soon discerned how successful had been their base expedient. The Welshman caught one and another of the flock that exhibited signs of the disease, before turning out in the morning; and there surely enough it was, plainly marked by a crimson flush upon the skin. Presently the animals began to leave tufts of the fleece behind them on any rough surface against which they had rubbed: not mere locks of shed wool, but fragments of their coat itself fallen out by the roots. And many, to the practised eye, exhibited the patch of bald skin with a bit of the fleece displaced by the inflammatory action, hanging down broad as a man's hand. One day the Welshman pointed out the consequences of his journey to the stockman, bitterly lamenting the disaster: but Morgan only gave

him the cold comfort that the best thing he could now do, was to make the diseased state of his flock known to the overseer or master as quickly as he could.

“Do you mean to tell 'em where the sheep got it, Taffy?” asked Brown, sarcastically: well knowing that the unlucky man meant to do nothing of the sort, and implying that, as he could tell, therefore he had him in his power.

Meantime, the other flock at the station had contracted the disorder, from using the same run, or putting their heads and necks into contact with each other through the slight fence of boughs. And, for some unexplained reason, the overseer, before the appearance of the disease in all its virulence in the Welshman's flock, had sent one flock to a fresh station and brought another into its place.

Scarcely had John Thomas given information to the overseer of the condition in which he found his flock, when the other shepherd, who had been shifted from the station where they were, added the tidings that his sheep also were exhibiting signs of infection. A like report was given in from the shepherd who had been last stationed with the Welshman; and finally, the fourth flock,

which had been brought into contiguity with the second, was added to the ruinous catalogue.

Meantime, every possible effort was apparently made by the overseer to stay the progress of the mischief: complete separation of the sound from unsound flocks was promptly effected; and remedial measures were seemingly applied; but all to no purpose.

First of all, the sheep began to drop two or three a day; then the rate went on to six or seven: and the numbers daily increased as the whole four flocks contributed their quota of deaths together; in short, they died in such numbers, and in such a corrupt state, that the usual custom of skinning and preserving the skin for the tanner, was no longer thought of. The dogs, gorged to the utmost, could hardly be made to follow the flocks by day or watch them in the yards by night; every water-hole was polluted by one or more putrid carcasses, and the very air of the runs was tainted by the intolerable stench. Bush-dogs were to be seen prowling solitary along, and carrion-birds flocked from all the surrounding parts, hopping about in wanton companies chattering and sated, in the full blaze of noon. It became necessary to resort to extraordinary

means to subdue the nuisance by burning the carcasses; and large many-logged fires were then to be seen blazing and cracking in all directions, on which the putrid sheep were piled and consumed, emitting a loathsome smoke that hung about among the trees like a pestilential fog; whilst in other spots, where the fires had burnt out, there were great black patches of charcoal and white calcined bones. Everybody who had had sheep in the vicinity had removed them, and a cordon of solitude was drawn round the place of desolation.

The feelings of the several individuals of the family, whose property and hold upon social rank was undergoing this cruel shock, were as various on the occasion as their characters were diverse. Although the Welshman would not acknowledge an acquaintance with the origin of the evil, the mere circumstance of his flock being first diseased inculpated him. Marianna refused to believe him culpable without proof; but neither her father, her mother, nor her cousin, could resist the fact itself, and the few but telling comments of Martin. Lieutenant Bracton and his wife felt the catastrophe keenly, from its bearing on their children. Katharine's sorrow arose almost wholly from

sympathy with her beloved relatives: she grieved that so calamitous an occurrence should becloud their prospects, till she almost lost sight of the cloud it threw upon her own. Marianna almost forgot it was a calamity, in her solicitude that it might not turn out to have been occasioned by the Welshman; whose simplicity, readiness to serve her, and partial dependence upon her protection, had rendered him so great a favourite. And as it happened, it suited no one of all those who knew the cause of the mischief, to state what they knew on the subject.

Meantime, the advice which was sure to be given to Lieutenant Bracton under the circumstances, by all his acquaintances out of as well as in the magistracy, was tendered plentifully. He was told that shepherds, entrusted as they are with such an amount of property, of a kind so easily injured, must positively be restrained from following their own thoughtless impulses, and when placed on a clean run must be made to keep upon it. He was also told that old hands always play on the new settler, and that the only remedy was in stringent measures; and he was counselled at once to make it known to his shepherds, that if, after the caution, any one of them

was detected off his run, the utmost penalty dictated by the law would be enforced.

His duty became clearer to the lieutenant every day, as the doleful report of his losses came in to him. His principle of government had always been to allow his men the utmost immunity that could be tolerated; but to hold irrevocable the threat with which he limited license. And when he at length felt it necessary to act on the counsels given him, he explained this in the most unmistakeable terms to his men.

The whole period seemed to be one destined to painful recollections, purposely adapted, on the one hand, to rouse energy, or, on the other, to prove the little knot of colonists unequal to their enterprise, and force them back to a position requiring less fortitude, and less strenuous exertion. A quantity of the cattle having been drafted off from the home herd, had been sent to Manaroo, under the charge of a new stock-keeper, with instructions to occupy a tract of land some few miles from Reuben Kable's. With the stock-keeper went also a hut-keeper and a bullock-driver, with a team adapted for the earliest services of such a station; the hut-keeper was quite a new hand.

A few mornings after the arrival of the party at their destination, the hut-keeper was requested by the bullock-driver (who happened to fancy he had just then something else to do), to fetch in the working cattle for him. It was one of those little acts of mutual accommodation which are always freely performed amongst working hands in the colony, and the hut-keeper started.

It had become the winter of the year; and in these regions, differently from those adjacent to the north of Sydney, very heavy snows occasionally fall. When the poor fellow went out on his errand, however, no change of weather was contemplated, otherwise he would not have been sent. More than one or two terrible tales of bewilderment and starvation on these vast plains were already current; and, if recollected in connection with the dulness of the morning, would probably have prevented him from being exposed to a danger which the most practised and most cautious bushmen, with all their tact, often barely evade.

However, forth he went (and it was some solace to them afterwards to recollect it), "reading his book." He was a Romanist, and much given to perusing some little devotional books he

possessed, the first thing in the morning and the last at night. It is but too true, however painful to be acknowledged, that no one is ever seen recognising by morning or evening prayer the existence and dominion of the Divine Being in these bush huts. The evil is so overwhelming in proportion to the good, that if in any single mind the latter haply succeeds in effecting a feeble perpetuation of itself, it is universally within the mind only; all outward manifestations vanish. And in all probability, these morning and evening studies of the hut-keeper were really outward forms of the transition state.

The bullocks ought to have been about three miles away upon, or on one of the sides of, a fine sweep of hill. From that spot and from all the open plain lying betwixt it and the hut, the hut, which was on a rising ground also, was clearly visible in ordinary states of the weather.

Indeed, no one but a "new chum" could have missed the course from the feeding ground to the hut, even in thick weather, for there was on each side of it a line of low hill. The traveller along the scope of plain, having once fixed its grand natural feature in his mind, had nothing to do



but resolutely abstain from rising a hill, and he must make the hut.

Soon after the hapless man set forth, a light sprinkling of snow began to fall; but it was so little, and the air as yet so still, that it suggested no uneasy apprehensions about him. As he could have his breakfast after they were gone out on their several duties, the two other men, leaving his quart pot of tea at the fire, sat down and had their own breakfast. On rising from it, however, and opening the hut door, they observed that the snow was coming down so rapidly and in such large flakes, that the ground was already covered two or three inches deep, and nothing could be seen at a couple of hundred yards away.

Immediately struck with what *might* occur, through the ignorance of their hut-mate of everything connected with bushmanship, they both hurried off in search of him, taking the middle of the flat, at some distance from each other, with an agreement that whichever of them met with him should koo-eh.

As they drew near the spot where the bullocks ought to have been, each with growing uneasiness listened for the koo-eh of the other; and so on,

right up to the cattle themselves. The cattle were where they had generally bedded, standing apparently wondering they were not fetched in yet. But there was no sign of the man; no tracks anywhere about on the new-fallen snow save those of the bullocks themselves; and his hut-mates now looked at each other in dismay and painful anticipation of the catastrophe.

The wind grew more and more boisterous every minute; they crossed the broad, bleak top of the hill in all directions; swept round the sides and base; shouted, met, looked at each other. The stockman hurried home for his horse and the whole of the dogs, whilst the bullock-driver swept, in larger and larger circuits, round the hill. The morning crept on to noon; noon to afternoon; the snow accumulated deeper and deeper upon the ground; other stations were visited and other stockmen engaged in the search: but night came, and the hapless man was missing still.

After an almost sleepless night, they rose again, and again traversed scores of miles of the still snow-covered surface. And so that day passed—and another, and another. And then the search was given up; and, so far as the

weather permitted, the ordinary business of the station gone on with.

Several weeks elapsed, each day wearing slowly out the melancholy impression; but yet that impression was frequently renewed for a time, as chance visitants from other stations inquired, over the evening fire, whether they had heard anything yet of their hut-keeper, and speculated upon his fate.

At length, when the snow had melted and the finer weather came, and the gullies began to be more traversed, he was found—or rather some bones were found—partly in and partly out of a stump-hole in the butt of a large old hollow trunk of standing timber. The clothing he wore was of the sort worn by the prisoners generally, and therefore could indicate no identity; but within the stump-hole there was his book, lying open on its face. He had probably wandered till nature was exhausted, and possibly found food for the immortal mind long after the cravings of the mortal part of humanity had ceased.

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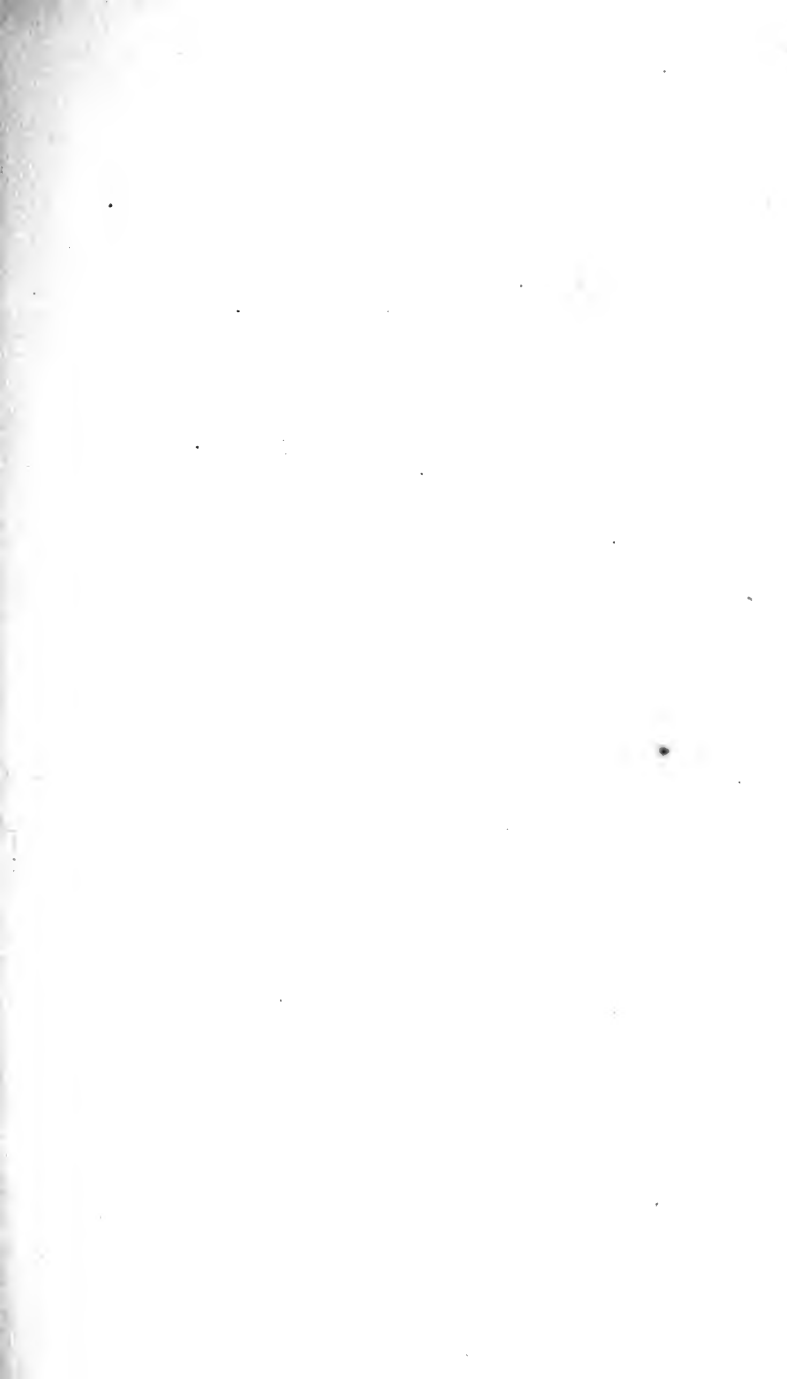
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